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CHRIST'S CROSS

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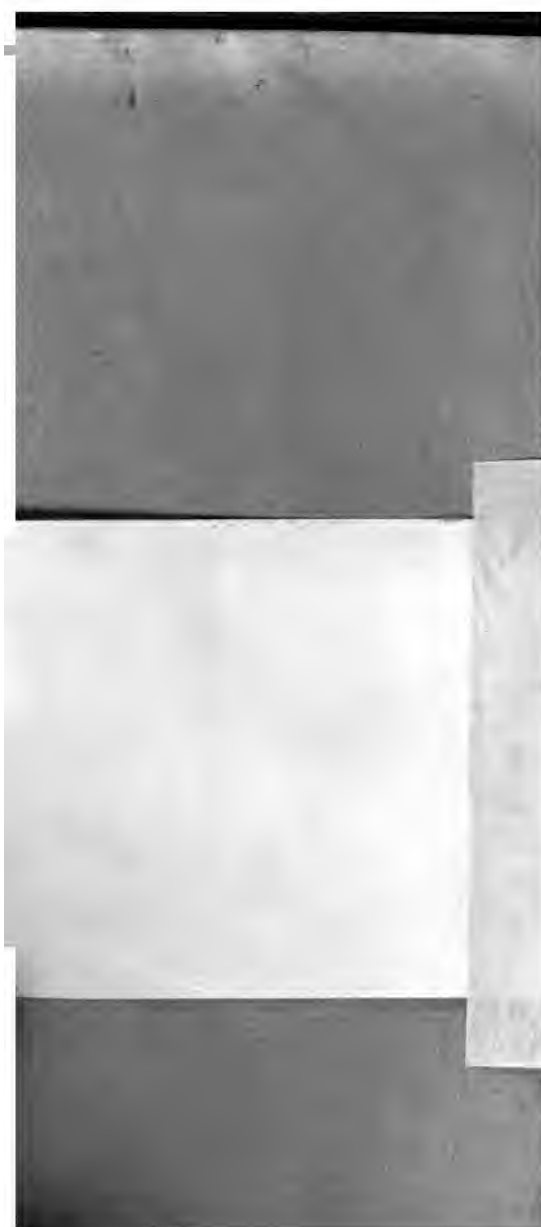
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To which are subjoined,

S I X S E R M • N S.

By the Reverend Mr. GEORGE MUIR,
Minister of the Gospel at PAISLEY.

THE SECOND EDITION.

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CHRIST'S

C H R I S T ' s C R O S S

A N D

C R O W N,

V I E W E D

From P S A L M xl. 1, 2, 3.

I waited patiently for the LORD, and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praises unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD.

I N T R O D U C T I O N.

THE promises, prophecies, and doctrines of the Old Testament, meet in Jesus Christ, as the different *radii*, from whatever point of the circumference, meet in the center. They have all a regard, more immediate or remote, to him; and can only afford encouragement and consolation to sinners, as they respect the Saviour. There are a variety of passages in the Old Testament writings,
A which

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which have such a direct and evident relation to the Messiah, that almost no Christians disagree in the application of them; but there are others, tho' no less expressive of the Messiah, in his humbled or exalted state, or both, which are not universally viewed in that light. Of these we take the passage now mentioned to be one: for though generally these verses are considered as pointing out the exercise of David, the then church, or after saints, they are more probably a prophetic description of *his* exercise who is David's Lord, the church's head, and the king of saints, namely, of the Old Testament Messiah, our New Testament Redeemer; and they are so, chiefly, because we find the 6th, 7th, and 8th verses of that psalm quoted and applied to Jesus Christ, by the author of the epistle to the Hebrews, in the xth chapter of that epistle, 5th, 6th and 7th verses; and having an inspired commentator to copy after, we need have no reluctance in treading his steps *. Besides, the repeated mention our Lord makes of what was written of him in the psalms, as well as by Moses and the prophets, corroborates the presumption; and fur-

* The original text runs thus :

"Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire, mine ears hast thou opened: burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me: I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart."

The quotation by the apostle runs thus :

"Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, but a body hast thou prepared me: in burnt-offerings, and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure: then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God."

ther

AND CROWN.

ther justifies the application of that passage to Christ.
To which it need scarce be added, that in the writings
of the apostles, we are informed of their following
that immaculate pattern, once, again and again, for
the imitation, doubtless, of after saints, in their
study of the Old Testament scriptures.

P A R T I.

Of the REDEEMER'S Humiliation or Cross.

C H A P I.

*Of Christ's active obedience, or of his waiting, wait-
ing patiently, and crying.*

S E C T. I.

HIS *waiting* for the Father says, that, as the
Messiah, or Christ, he stood and acted in the
capacity of the Father's servant; and did so in the
different regards to be mentioned: according to
the doctrine of the holy Ghost, Psal. cxxiii. 2.
where the church is represented as saying, "Be-
hold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hands
of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto
the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon
the Lord our God." For our Lord, in his me-
diatory character, is denominated the Father's ser-
vant, both by Old and New Testament writers.
The prophet represents the Father as saying of
Christ the Messiah, "Behold my *Servant* whom I

† Luke xx. 42. and xxiv. 44.

‡ Acts ii. 25, 26, 27, 28. and xiii. 33, 35.

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"uphold; mine Elect in whom my soul delighteth," Is. xlii. 1. And the apostle, inspired from the same original, expresseth himself to the same purpose; though from the view of Christ's divinity, considers it as a stupendous act of condescension in him: "Who being in the form of God (said he) thought it no robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant," Phil. ii. 6, 7.

Our Lord in his humiliation, not only bore the designation of a servant, but considered himself as such, and therefore came to do his Father's work, to negotiate the errand and business of heaven. However voluntary and cheerful in the whole, he acted strictly by commission; and, in the execution of it, studied the Father's approbation, as his sole constituent in that respect; "My meat (said he) is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work," John iv. 34. "I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which sent me," John v. 30. and again, "I have glorified thee on earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do," John xvii. 4.

In the execution of his Father's will, our Lord, as Man-Mediator, acted a dependence upon the Father, for what strength, through bearing and consolation he needed. Considered as man, viewed as a creature, his circumstances required daily supplies from heaven, as to soul and body both. Accordingly, for these, in the station of a servant, as well as in the capacity of a son, he was properly and personally a believer: "Behold my servant, (said the Father, pointing at the Messiah) whom I uphold," Is. xlii. 1. In his divine nature, Christ was independent; whence, in so far as the Father upheld him, he must be considered as man; and the Father's

ther's proposing thus to minister unto him, supposes a corresponding temper of mind, in his immaculate human nature, to wait for such dispensation or interposition. The different answers which our Lord made to Satan's temptations in the wilderness of Jüdea, are beautiful expressions of this believing dependence. "He said, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Again, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God:" and again, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve," Matth. iv. 4, 7, 10. all which, as he quoted from the Old Testament scriptures, he applied to himself. And the apostle, speaking of the life of Christ as Man-Mediator, says, "We having the *same* spirit of faith," namely, that prevailed in him, and was exercised by him, "ac-cording as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken," 2 Cor. iv. 13. where Paul quoting the 10th verses of the cxvi psalm, evidently applies it to Jesus Christ, as an expression of his believing dependence on the Father.

Having thus entered upon his Father's work, our Lord looked for, and expected, the promised period of his humiliation, with the reward to follow upon it, respecting himself in particular, and his people in general. "Surely (said he by the prophet) my judgment is with the Lord, and (as it is in the marginal reading) my reward is with my God," Is. xlix. 4. "The things (said he, applying the prophecies of his sufferings and death) concerning me have an end," Luke xxii. 37. The prophecies, would he have said, concerning my humiliation, have an appointed time, for their gradual, but final accomplishment; when my humiliation itself shall intirely and eternally cease. "Hereafter (said he to Nathaniel) you shall

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"see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man," John i. 51. And to the high priest, when pannelled as a malefactor before him, we find him saying, "Hereafter ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven," Matth. xxvi. 64. All manifest declarations of his waiting for the Father's reward, as well as for the period of his own humiliation.

S E C T. II.

Our Lord waiting *patiently* for the Father, points the *manner* in which his service was performed, and his believing dependence exercised.

The manner in which our Lord performed his Father's work, was no less peculiar than the work itself. Arduous, difficult, and dangerous as it was, he undertook it: with whatever opposition he met, from men and devils, friends and foes, he entered upon it: and to whatever contempt and sufferings his doing so behoved necessarily to expose him, he, blessed be he, went through with it. At a certain time, when the Pharisees, who did all in their power, by secret fraud, as well as by open force, to explode the credit of his mission, and mar the success of his ministry; when they, with a view to intimidate the Saviour, said unto him, "Get thee out hence, for Herod will kill thee;" he, mindful, for his Father and the people, of his covenant, "said unto them, Go ye and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils and do cures to-day, and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected: nevertheless, I must walk to-day, to-morrow, and the day following; for it cannot be, that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem," Luke xiii. 31, 32, 33. Nay, on the accomplishment

complishment of his work and warfare, he was so much set, that even a favourite apostle must be severely reprimanded, if he but open his mouth in opposition to it: for when Peter, hearing his master's sufferings and death foretold, said, "Be it far from thee Lord, this shall not be unto thee;" the evangelist informs us, that "Jesus turned and said unto him, Get thee behind me Satan, thou art an offence unto me, for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men," Matth. xvi. 22, 23.

In his humiliation, our Lord was taken in no lurch, surprised by no circumstance, he did not previously see, weigh, and consider. With a holy composure, peculiar to himself, he took an accurate fore-view, made a particular survey, of all the different parts, the various particulars, of that work his Father gave him to do; without being thence tempted, at least without being determined, to throw up his commission, resign his office, or desert his station. "From that time forth" (says the evangelist) Jesus began to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders, and chief priests, and scribes, and be killed," Matth. xvi. 21. "As Jonas (said our Lord to the Pharisees) was three days, and three nights, in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days, and three nights, in the heart of the earth," Matth. xii. 40. The very instrument of his being delivered into the hands of sinful men was known to him at the first: "For he knew (says the evangelist) from the beginning, who should betray him," John vi. 64. Were men to read the designs of providence, respecting their sufferings, before hand; any patience, competent or possible for them, would not stand the first sight; the most patient

patient of them could not do otherways than sink, before they were actually laid under the trial, cast into the furnace. But in this, as in every other regard, the Master has the pre-eminence over the servants, and the head over the members.

As the Saviour met with no surprise, he expressed no grudge, fret, or disgust at any part of his Father's will. "The cup (said he) which the Father hath given me, shall I not drink?" Joba xviii. 11. Nor did he insinuate the least resentment against the ungenerous, unreasonable, malicious instruments of his trial, sufferings and death. For though "he was oppressed and afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth," Isa. liii. 7. O patience truly divine! what holy, what noble, matchless and expressive silence is here!

Besides, our Lord bore with the unteachableness of his disciples, the slowness of his followers, to believe what the prophets had spoken; and bore it with a tenderness, delicacy and forbearance, which, unless in the love of the Father, had no precedent, knew no parallel. For, according to the apostle's description of a high priest, to which our Lord's character answered, as face answers to face in a glass; or rather, of which our Lord's character was the true, spotless, matchless original; he must be one, "who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way," Heb. v. 2. Nay, we are called to "consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself," Heb. xii. 3. Though he could have destroyed them, he bore with them, and bore with them, when their cruelty and resentment were directly levelled against his person, doctrine, interest and works; in which his princely

ly patience appeared to greater advantage, shined forth with the most distinguished splendour.

The manner in which our Lord exercised his believing dependence was no less peculiar, than the manner in which he performed his Father's work. For though he absolutely believed the truth of his Father's promises to him, he left the time and the way of performance intirely to the Father himself. And if his harmless human nature seemed, under the hottest conflict, to recoil, and to express a wishfulness that the bitterness of his cup might immediately pass over, he instantly recovered himself; and at once, resuming the bravery peculiar to him, as the captain of his people's salvation, said, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt," Matth. xxvi. 39. Nor could the highest degrees of sufferings inflicted, the highest penal demands made, by the Father upon him, as the surety of sinners, interrupt his believing claim of relation to the Father, and interest in him. For when bruised, bleeding and groaning, under the immense load of law-wrath upon the cross, we find his faith screwed up to the highest pitch; making him, with holy, believing, intrepid resolution, to cry, "My God," and again, "My God," Psal. xxii. 1. Matth. xxvii. 46.

Though our Lord's personal ministry was, comparatively, unsuccessful; though in particular corners, he did not many mighty works, because of their unbelief; though, through the whole of his tabernacling on earth, he had reason to say, "I have laboured in vain; I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain," II. xlix. 4. yet he believed, that after his translation to heaven, the ends of his death, as to all for whom he suffered, should eventually and effectually be reached. The Father having promised concerning him, that "he should

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"see of the travail of his soul, and should be satisfied," Is. liii. 11. faith in him, answering to the Father's veracity in that promise, made him say, "All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me," John vi. 37. However thy men were then to repair underneath the banners of salvation; the blessed Jesus was persuaded, that, as to all his elect seed, the vessels of mercy, his Father would draw them to him, and glorify him in them. Whence he could assure his disciples, of the descent of the holy Ghost, of his going to prepare a place for them, and of his seeing them again, to their unspeakable, indelible, everlasting joy.

Under whatever calumny and reproach, our Lord was laid, by the scourge of tongues; however misconstrued and misrepresented by his enemies, open or disguised; he rested satisfied in the Father's approbation of him, and determination concerning him; persuaded he would make his righteousness break forth as the light, and his judgment as the noon day. In this faith, the Man Christ enjoyed peace in the midst of war, serenity in the midst of tumult, and happiness when, to the human eye, he was only a man of sorrows, and acquainted with griefs. For "When he was reviled (says the apostle) he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously," 1 Peter iii. 23.

S E C T. III.

Our Lord *crying* to the Father is a term, importing the same as prayer and supplication to God. "Cease not (said the Israelites to Samuel) to cry unto the Lord for us, that he will save us out of the hand of the Philistines," 1 Sam. vii. 8. And "this poor man (says the prophet, very properly,
"bably,

“ bably, of the Messiah) *cried*, and the Lord heard “ him, and saved him out of all his troubles,” Psal. xxxiv. 6. As a praying person, the man Christ spent much of his time on earth in that exercise, thereby maintaining delightful intercourse with his Father, and setting an amiable pattern before his people. For, “ When he had sent the “ multitudes away, he went up into a mountain, “ apart to pray,” Matth. xiv. 23. Again, “ In “ the morning, rising up a great while before day, “ he went out, departed into a solitary place, and “ there prayed,” Mark i. 35. And again, “ He “ went out into a mountain to pray, and continu- “ ed all night in prayer to God,” Luke vi. 12. Nor was our Lord only much employed in prayer, but his *crying* to God pointed out earnestness, pain and distress in it; his prayers were quite the reverse of that formality and indifference, that wandering and inattention, which accompany, stain and disgrace, the best prayers of the best men on whom the sun ever shone. His prayers were all expressive of his feelings, and kept pace exactly with them. For as he did no sin, so “ neither was guile found “ in his mouth,” 1 Pet. ii. 22. and it was under the severest distress that the prophet represented him, as “ crying day and night,” Psal. xxii. 2. The earnestness and anxiety of the children of Israel, when they “ *sighed* by reason of the bondage, “ and *cried*,” Exod. ii. 23. or of the Ekronites, when the hand of God being very heavy upon them, “ the *cry* of the city went up to heaven,” 1 Sam. v. 12. These and such instances, though vastly short of that holy expressive ardour pointed out by the Redeemer’s cry, tend to illustrate and cast a light upon it.

Our Lord’s prayers while on earth, were sometimes expressed in words, such as could be heard

and understood by others: accordingly, we have several specimens of them, transmitted by the evangelists; the most remarkable of which, is that whereof the whole 17th chapter of John consists. But his cry was likewise expressed, on some occasions, by the effusion of tears, through which, as from other causes, "his visage was marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men," *Ist. lii. 14.* Thus we are informed of his weeping once and again, *Luke xix. 41.* and *John xi. 35.* and assured, that "he offered up prayers and supplications with tears," *Heb. v. 7.* On other occasions, it was expressed by sighs and groans, as what were too big for utterance: for we are told, that "looking up to heaven, he sighed," *Mark vii. 34.* that "he sighed deeply in his spirit," *Mark viii. 12.* that "he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled," *John xi. 33.* and that "he again groaned in himself," *vers. 38.* This, however, is not the whole. The cry of the Man Christ was sometimes expressed by actual crying, nay, roaring; as what his unutterable feelings extorted from him, when exercising the greatest patience that humanity, in her highest innocence, was capable of. By the prophet he is represented as saying, "Why art thou so far from helping me, from the words of my roaring?" *Psal. xxii. 1.* Upon the cross, as the accomplishment of that prophecy, "he cried (once and again) with a loud voice;" with the last of which cries he yielded up his immaculate spirit, *Matth. xxvii. 46, 50.* And the apostle bears witness, that "in the days of his flesh, he offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying," *Heb. v. 7.* But why insist on these things? were not his needs and wants, as Man-Mediator, were they not in themselves a continual cry, in the ears of the Father?

ther?

ther ? His hunger, thirst, weariness, reproach, pain and distress, were all as so many tongues, upon which eloquence, argument and persuasion always sat. To every student of the scriptures, it will at once appear, that our Lord had such needs, felt such wants ; nay, that from the manger to the grave, he was mostly, if not wholly, such a man of sorrows and acquainted with griefs. And unless it could be imagined, that the Father had less concern about his own Son, than about the irrational tribes ; it is plain, these manifold necessities of his came up, as in the most expressive language, before the throne : for inspiration assures us, that " God giveth to the beast his food, and to the " young ravens which cry," Psal. cxlvii. 9. and our Lord himself taught his disciples, that their heavenly Father " fed the fowls of the air, who " neither sow, reap, nor gather into barns," Matth. vi. 26.

When thus humbled, the prayers or cries of the Man Christ were put up on his own behalf. " O " my Father (said he, once, again and again) if " it be possible, let this cup pass from me ; but if " this cup may not pass from me, except I drink " it, thy will be done," Matth. xxvi. 39, 42. " Father, the hour is come ; glorify thy Son, that " thy Son also may glorify thee. O Father, glorify me with thine own self ; with the glory " which I had with thee, before the world was," John xvii. 1, 5. " Be not thou far from me, O " Lord, O my strength, haste thee to help me, " deliver my soul from the sword, my darling from " the power of the dog ; save me from the lions " mouth," Psal. xxii. 19, 20, 21. But though our Lord prayed for himself, his cries, or prayers, were by no means confined to himself ; for we find his concern about the promotion of his Father's
glory

glory on earth not only expressed, by teaching his disciples to pray, "Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven, Matth. vi. 9, 10. and adjoining with them in these petitions; but by an actual, immediate, particular, address to the Father, for that purpose, by himself, saying, "Father, glorify thy name," John xii. 28. In these prayers, or cries, his apostles and "the men which accompanied with them, all the time that he went in and out among them," had a peculiar share. Besides the many prayers put up for them, in the former periods of his humiliation, there is a beautiful cluster of such petitions, in the 17th chapter of John; "Holy Father (said he) keep, through thine own name, those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one as we are," vers. 11. "Keep them from the evil," vers. 15. "Sanctify them through thy truth," vers. 17. "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me," vers. 24. Nor did he only pray for his then disciples, but for all who, in every age of the Christian church, should, by conversion to the faith and hope of the gospel, become such. "Neither pray I for these alone (said he) but for them also which shall believe on me through their word," John xvii. 20. Nay, his prayers were extended to his enemies themselves. In praying for them who should afterwards believe, he, doubtless, prayed for his enemies, all being by nature enemies to him, enmity against him: but he more especially prayed for those who were immediately instrumental in his sufferings and death, at least for such of them as he had gracious designs upon; and prayed for them, when most persecuted by them. "Father (said he, in his last agonies
" upon

" upon the cross) forgive them, for they know not what they do," Luke xxiii. 34.

The cries or prayers of the Man Christ were vastly different from those of other men, *in the innocence and purity of them.* Whatever guilt was imputed to him, there was none committed by him. Though, as the representative of sinners, he was, in a legal sense, most guilty; yet, in a personal abstracted view, he was of all men the most immaculate and holy. Though, in the language of the apostle, he was "made sin for us,—he knew no sin," 2 Cor. v. 21. Whence all his prayers behaved to be of a piece with the distinguishing sanctity of his nature; without the smallest mixture of weakness, guilt or imperfection. Accordingly, as one apostle informs us, that "he knew no sin;" another assures us, that "he did no sin," 2 Pet. ii. 22. did no sin in heart, word, or action; no sin in a personal or relational capacity, in a moral or religious regard. Which with no propriety can be said of mere men: for there is not only, "no man that sinneth not," 1 Kings viii. 46. but no "just man, upon earth, that doth good, and sinneth not," Eccl. vii. 20. In the very prayers, and other religious performances of holy men, there is so much guilt, that infinite holiness might justly condemn their persons, and reject their performances, on account of it. For "who can say, "I have my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?" Prov. xx. 9. Nay, "if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us," 1 John i. 8.

His prayers or cries differed likewise from those of mere men; as by them *he approached immediately to the Father, without using a mediator.* It is an invariable maxim in the system of Christianity, That as "there is one God, and one Mediator be-
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"tween God and man," 1 Tim. ii. 5. so, that "no man cometh unto the Father but by him," John xiv. 6. whereas our Lord dealt immediately with the divine Majesty in person; evident from his very designation of a Mediator, which supposes his dealing immediately with God, the offended, as he dealt immediately with man, the offending party. For a Mediator incapable of approaching both the disagreed parties, could be no Mediator, could effect no proper mediation; and thence could not, without impropriety, so much as deserve the name. Nor did he only use no Mediator, but he actually needed none. Guilt renders God tremendous and awful to sinners. Guilt stands as an irrefragable bar between God and man. Guilt not only provokes Jehovah to speak to them in wrath, but makes sinners themselves shy of approaching to him. What the people of Israel said unto Moses, the typical Mediator, is the truth respecting every mere man, how soon, and in how far, the infinite distance between God and him is discovered. "And all the people (says the historian) saw the thunderings, and lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off; and they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die;" Exod. xx. 18, 19. whereas our Lord's righteousness, his personal conformity to the Father, was such, in breadth and length, in kind and degree, that he could, and, with all propriety, did plead the merit of it, as his argument with the Father, in crying to him. "Let not them (said he) that wait upon thee, O Lord, God of hosts, be ashamed for my sake; let not those that seek thee be confounded for my sake, O God of Israel:" and as the argu-
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ment for acceptance, he added, "Because, for thy sake, I have born reproach; shame hath covered my face," Psal. lxxix. 6, 7. "I have glorified thee on earth, (said he) I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do;" there is the plea, upon which he founded the following claim: "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee, before the world was," John xvii. 4, 5. He pled, not on the footing of mercy and forbearance in God, but on the footing of righteousness, absolute, eternal righteousness, in the Divine Nature; as what, disposing and determining Jehovah to render to every one according to their real demerit, behoved to conclude for the answer of his prayers; evident from his calling him, in that noticeable prayer, "Holy Father," and again, "Righteous Father," John xvii. 11, 25. In this there was nothing presumptuous or premature; for the Father was "well pleased for his righteousness' sake," as consisting in his "magnifying the law, and making it honourable," Is. xlii. 21. *The prayers or cries of Jesus Christ were always such as the Father was well pleased to grant.* Other men, saints not excepted, may, through their blindness and imperfection, ask, not only what the Father will not give, but what, should he indulge them in, would be hurtful for them to receive. "Ye ask (says the apostle) and ye receive not, because ye ask amiss," James iv. 3. This is uniformly the case with sinners; and, in things respecting a present life, or not essential to salvation, frequently the case with saints themselves. Whereas no desires flowed from the Saviour's heart, no petition dropped from his lips, but what was intirely a transcript of the Father's will, altogether a copy of the divine purpose and pleasure, and an invariable evidence

evidence of what Jehovah would actually grant. From the Father's repeated declaration concerning Christ, first at his baptism, and then at his transfiguration; the complacency he had in his prayers, as well as in his person, is manifest and clear. "This (said he) is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," Matth. iii. 17. and Matth. xvii. 5. and, from what our Lord himself said to the Pharisees, it is plain he had the believing persuasion, the delightful conviction, that in prayer as well as in other duties, he always, without exception, squar'd his conduct by the divine pleasure. "He that sent me (said he) is with me; the Father hath not left me alone, for I do always those things that please him," John viii. 29. As an obvious consequence from this, *our Lord's cry never failed of success*, his prayer never missed an answer. Saints may pray once, again, and again, to no purpose; they, in manifold instances, may, with the church complain, "Thou coverest thyself with a cloud, that our prayers shall not pass through," Lam. iii. 44. But, whatever desertion the Man Christ, as to his Father's comfortable presence, groaned under, his prayers were never sent empty away: For "he lift up his eyes" (says the evangelist) and said, Father, I thank thee "that thou hast heard me; and I know that thou hearest me always," John xi. 41, 42. The most remarkable circumstances, however, in which the prayers of the Man Christ differed from those of other men, was, *his sometimes demanding, rather than begging, of the Father*. As to mere men, they must fall down, as unworthy creatures, at the footstool of mercy, the throne of grace; sensible they deserve not what they ask; persuaded that Jehovah may, without injustice, deny their request: and quite satisfied that, unless the sovereignty

ty of grace turn the scale in their favour, no blessing can be granted to them, or enjoyed by them. So much is comprehended in the highest boldness, assurance, and confidence of faith, that was ever exercised, by any heir of promise, in his dealings with God. But our Lord, even in the days of his flesh, sometimes pled in a strain very different; in a strain unprecedented, inimitable, and peculiar. "Father, *I will* (said he) that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me," John xvii. 24. Strange! *I will!* and not, *If thou wilt!* Yes; our Lord, having the Father's everlasting obligation to him, for that purpose, in his hand, makes a demand on the promiser, for the accomplishment of his promise; there is an immediate requisition in this case. Nay more, the Redeemer speaks in strains of his divinity; and speaks his purpose into being; speaks as co-equal with the Father, respecting the crowning mercy he intended to perform toward all his spiritual seed.

S E C T. IV.

What beauty, simplicity, and grandeur, appear in the Redeemer's character, as represented? What an amiable, significant, and important picture does it set before us? Never was the exercise of patience screwed up to such an amazing pitch; never did the grace of patience shine with equal splendor, advantage and glory. Never did that divine virtue receive such honour, or appear with such magnificence, as in the humiliation of Jesus Christ, his people's Lord. Compared with this, the patience of Job, what is it? to what sum total does it amount? Compared with this, even the patience of Job is as a twinkling taper, to the sun in his brightness; weighed in the scales of the scripture, lighter than nothing, absolute vanity. Here is patience without

without a spurn, beauty without a blot, and perfection without the smallest flaw. What, but Divine Wisdom, could have formed such a grand design? what, but Divine Love, could have executed such a costly plan? God manifested! manifested in the flesh! manifested in the likeness of sinful flesh! manifested in the character of a subject; under authority as a son; in waiting as a servant! However low this grace of our Lord Jesus Christ in the view of naughty mortals, it is celebrated in the highest strains of angelic praise, heavenly wonder, and seraphic joy. Though small and despised, without form and comeliness, in the eyes of unbelievers, and partly too in the eyes of militant saints themselves; the Jerusalem above is filled with ceaseless hosannahs unto this son of David; as once humbled, though now exalted; once obedient, though now obeyed; wounded, though now healed; dead, though now alive; entombed, though now enthroned. As the circumstance of his former humiliation gives peculiar life to the whole consort within the vail; it should excite the wonder, as well as command the attention, of the churches below, and encourage the travellers of hope to essay the exercise of humble patient waiting for God. What a distinguishing grace does it give to this path of the saints, that it was trode before them by the King of saints? In the exercise of believing patience, holy obedience, may they not trade the prints of their Redeemer's feet, as the Divine Forerunner? may they not see the way all along paved by himself? And what encouragement is afforded to the enemies of Jesus Christ, to fall in with the gospel design of saving sinners; since, in order to win, gather and ransom their souls, he humbled himself; and to them sends this
word

word of salvation, for their improvement; in the way, for the ends, to the praise of Divine Grace?

Did Jesus Christ, the New Testament Jacob, cry? then all the true Israel of God will be praying and wrestling persons. Wherever the same spirit directs, wherever the same motives prevail, wherever the same practice appears, though mixed with numberless, nameless, imperfections and discouragements, there is reason to conclude, you belong to Christ's family, make a part of his little flock. Do ye find it a relief, under pressures, afflictions, and temptations, to retire from society, and pour out your hearts to God? without such opportunity of retirement, for that purpose, are your hearts as bottles like to burst, and your feelings too big for mortality to endure? Is any place a palace to you, where liberty to draw near to the Lord's seat, and to fill your mouths with arguments, is commanded and enjoyed? have you secret, sensible, unutterable uneasiness, when your closed lips are not opened, your languid hearts not enlarged; but when lifelessness and formality are written upon all your praying seasons? Is it your ambition to have your chains broken, your fetters knocked off, and your souls taken out of prison, that you may glorify the name of the Lord? or, is the felt or feared want of such concern, matter of exercise and bitterness to you? Then it would seem you were animated with the Spirit of Christ. And therefore, whatever arguings against yourselves prevail, you are surely Galileans, your speech bewrayeth you.

Nor are your privileges less distinguishing, than is your character; since our Lord cried, and cried for you, in the days of his humiliation. Had he not cried, our crying would have been in vain, our prayers ineffectual, and all our expectations as the giving up of the ghost. But did the Redeemer cry?

cry? were such petitions offered up by the blessed Immanuel? and did the hearer of prayer himself become a supplicant? Then all hail, my praying friends! it is the surest earnest, your cry is heard, and your tears are come up before God. Nor is this all, for our dear Lord continues to act in the capacity of an Intercessor within the veil, until all the ends of his cries and groans are fully reached, in the final salvation of your souls. However distant in respect of comfortable enjoyment from the Lord as your God, the Redeemer abides in the divine Presence, and abides for your behoof. Put honour therefore upon him, by presenting his cry to the Father, as your plea for access and acceptance. Put honour upon him, by committing your wants, weaknesses and requests, into his hand, who has so much to say with the hearer of prayer; nay, who in his Divine Nature, is the hearer of prayer himself. Nor give place to discouragement, since you have such a noble, generous, and prevalent friend at the court of heaven.

Prayerless persons, however, have no pretensions to the character and privileges of Christians. You who can be whole days and nights, without bowing a knee at the throne of grace; who can lie down, and rise up, without praying to the God of your life, the length of your days, and the rock of your salvation; who can find and take time for every thing else but devotion; who prefer any employment to that of prayer, any society to that of solitude, any enjoyment to that of secret intercourse with heaven; who can make public, or at most family prayer suffice, without studying closet devotion; who can enter your families, your shops, your barns, your folds, and even your churches, day after day, as prayerless as the grovelling little animals that follow you; and who, whatever
fashion

fashion you may make of prayer, enter not at all into the spirit of it, know nothing beyond the external performance, skim on the surface of that important duty: What are you? are you young and gay? are you rich and wealthy? are you wise and penetrating? are you admired and esteemed? It matters not, though you had all the beauties, the grandeurs, and the advantages, the creation itself can give; you are prayerless wretches, graceless persons, Christless souls; you have no interest in the Redeemer's cry, no part in his intercession, and, for any thing appears, shall have no lot in the inheritance of the saints in light. Rouse, awake, up, O sleepers! arise, shake off these guilt, these deadly, these accursed slumbers; cry, now cry unto God, as a God in Christ, that ye perish not: if not interested in the merit of Immanuel's cry, if not followers of him in his prayerful character, you shall not only cry and not be heard, but shall roar under the load of unmendable, unbearable despair, in that place where horror, everlasting horror and anguish, reign and dwell.

C H A P. II.

*Of the Messiah's passive obedience, or his being in:
"the horrible pit and miry clay."*

P R E L I M I N A R Y.

AS a common person, our Lord lived, died, and rose again; as representing others, he humbled himself; and in the same capacity he was exalted by the Father; so that believers may look
upon

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upon him in both points of view, with distinguishing pleasure : and consider themselves as particularly interested in what he was, did, suffered, endured, and procured, as Man-Mediator. Nor are his sufferings inexpressive of the trials to which his members may be exposed, under which they may grow in the house of their pilgrimage ; for as they all will be made conform to him in his glory, it is no more than reasonable, they should be like him in his low condition.

In these low circumstances, however, our Lord can only be considered as Man-Mediator. To suppose the contrary, would argue the grossest blasphemy, the highest impiety ; because, in his divine nature, he neither suffered, nor was capable of it ; in that view he was, is, and continues the independent Jehovah, infinitely happy, infinitely removed from every circumstance subversive of perfection in happiness. None of these passions or connections, which to mortals are the source of their infelicities, are, or can possibly be known by him, who is the immortal, the everlasting God. So that when inspired writers represent him in such humbled circumstances, we must consider him only as the Man Christ Jesus. In which capacity, indeed, though he was absolutely divested of these passions which are the terming womb of sorrow and distress to mere men ; yet his connections were such, as laid him under inevitable obligations to go through the hottest furnace of trial ever mortal trode, and through such a furnace, as no man but himself was ever capable of treading. He was connected with the Law-giver by covenant, and with law-breakers by substitution ; and thence exposed, justly exposed, to all the Law-giver could demand, and to all the law-breaker should undergo.

The horrible pit and the miry clay are only different

ferent modes of the same situation. It is literally a noisy pit, a well, or a basin; in which, through the fall of waters, as from a breaking cataract or prominent cascade, there is a mighty noise. In allusion to which the psalmist said of himself, "Deep calleth unto deep, at the noise of thy waterspouts; all thy waves and billows are gone over me," Psa. xlii. 7. And as in the bottom of these caverns there is generally such a collection of mud and gravel, that one's feet has no solid foundation, upon which to rest; though a person literally in such situation was able to bear the danger and inconveniency, arising from the fall and noise of waters about him; he behaved, from the very nature of the things, to perish; from the other circumstance, of the yielding bottom upon which he stood. Thus the Messiah is represented, as saying, "I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing," Psa. lxix. 2. Besides, from this striking figure, it would seem, that though the person in such perilous circumstances had a way through which he might make his escape; yet the mire, in which he dipt, was of such an entangling nature, so tough and congealed, that it held him fast in proportion as it gave way: than which, nothing can exhibit a livelier, more significant picture of our Lord's forlorn circumstances in his human nature upon earth.

SECTION I.

A pit into which, among men, criminals are cast, being a place of shame, disgrace and contempt; this figure points out the Redeemer's assumption of our nature, and his appearing in the likeness of sinful flesh, as, during his humiliation, a state of ignominy and shame. The undertaking was truly
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noble,

noble, generous and divine. But as personating and representing sinners; as standing in their law-room and stead; he appeared in an ignoble point of light. He was considered as if he had himself been a transgressor; as if in person a law-breaker; as if not only a sinner, but the greatest and grossest of all sinners; nay, considered as if all the iniquities of all the ransomed ones had been accumulated together in his person and character, as Man-Mediator. To this purpose, it was said of him, by the evangelical prophet, that "he was numbered "with the transgressors," *Is. liii. 12.* and accomplished in him, when he suffered between two sinners, as if more sinful than either, as if a greater transgressor than both. Nay, on this stupendous doctrine, the apostle says more in one word, than we know language fully to open up. "God " (says he) hath made him to be *sin* for us," *2 Cor. v. 21.* not only made him appear in the likeness and character of a sinner; but, as if *all sin* had met and concentrated in his person, he made him *sin*, set him in such a point of light, substitute him in the room of such a number of vile sinners, that, in that abstracted view, nothing but *sin*, guilt and obligation to sufferings, punishment and death, appeared. Nor was our Lord only a sinner, in way of substitution by the Father, and right of requisition by the law; but was accounted such by men, while he tabernacled with them upon earth; nay, was treated by them, as if not only a sinful and worthless man, but as if a messenger detached from the conclave from below. This man is not of "God, (said they at one time) because he keepeth "not the sabbath-day," *John ix. 16.* We know, " (saith they, at another) that this man is a sinner," *vers. 24.* again, said they, "He hath a devil, "and is mad," *John x. 20.* and, at the concluding scene

scene of his suffering, don't you hear them crying, "Away with him, away with him?" John xix. 15. as if a nuisance, burden and pest to society, as if vile to such degree, that, the earth groaned underneath him. Of this, too, the Redeemer himself had such a feeling, such a delicate sense, that the prophet represents him as saying, "I am a worm, and no man." Psalm xxii. 6. accounted a mean, base, grovelling reptile; as is fit for nothing, but to be trampled upon, and trod under foot. How justly, then, is this situation compared to a place of disgrace, as well as distress?

Such a pit, having floods of water breaking continually in upon it, with impetuous rapidity, rushing down as from an immense precipice, gushing forth, as from a hovering, distended, bursting cataract or water-spout; serves, elegantly serves, to point out the terms in which men, sinful men, stand with God; and in which the Man Christ, when doing and suffering in their room, stood with his Father. Sin no sooner entered into the world, men were no sooner in the pit of transgression, than the clouds of wrath began to gather, and to hover above their guilty heads; now and then breaking out in a visible manner, as by the flood on the old world, by fire and brimstone on Sodom and Gomorrah, by the opening earth swallowing up Korah and his unhappy associates. And, as the clouds of wrath, in particular instances, broke out in a visible manner; so, since the fall, they have continued to discharge themselves in a real, though insensible way, upon the workers of iniquity, in all these pains and perils, in all that distress and danger, with which a present state is so imbittered; and to discharge themselves upon the finally impenitent, in the successive damnation of their respective souls. But never *did those clouds of wrath* gather to such an awful head,

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head, never did they wear such a louring aspect, nor fall with equal intrepidity and vengeance, as when, the Man Christ, in the room of sinners, was the object upon whom they were levelled, and against whom they were directed. In pouring out his wrath upon particular persons, cities, societies or nations; Jehovah, the God of truth, punished them indeed, but punished them only for their own iniquities: whereas, in reckoning with the Mediator, though the Father saw no iniquity in himself to punish him for, he had countless vials of inexpressible wrath to pour out upon him; not for the sins of one person, or city, or nation, or generation; but for the *whole* sins of a *whole* elect world. Whence he pronounces sentence against him, considered as our surety, in these surprising, these amazing terms; "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the *man* that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the shepherd," Zech. xiii. 7. In execution of this tremendous sentence, "The Lord (actually) laid on him the iniquity of us all," Is. liii. 6. *i. e.* the wrath due to the manifold iniquity of all the ransomed ones; and, under the dreadful conflict, our Lord himself is represented as saying, "The waters are come in into my soul," Psal. lxxix. 1. O sirs, if the wrath of God, poured out into the soul of one sinner, for his own sins only, makes such a hell of anguish and misery; what a hell must the Man Christ have gone through, under the weight of all the wrath due to thousands, and ten thousands; nay, under the load of all the wrath, due to such "a great multitude as no man can number!" But vast as his hell of wrath behoved to be; "surely he hath born our griefs, and carried our sorrows; he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon

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“ on him ; and by his stripes we are healed,” II. liii. 4, 5. These clouds of wrath, those cataracts of vengeance, broke out upon him, in his soul and body, in his life and death : and though there was no period of his humiliation, in which he was not bearing as well as doing, something, in the room of sinners ; yet there were particular seasons, in which he was more remarkably overwhelmed by the wrath of God. Now, we find “ his soul exceeding sorrowful, even unto death ;” then, we see him “ sweating great drops of blood ;” and again, we hear him crying unto a hiding Father, and groaning after a forsaking God.

As, in such a pit, the ears of the forlorn prisoner are continually filled, and his heart perpetually alarmed, with the noise of these falling waters ; and with the breaking of those impending clouds, ready to burst in with redoubled force ; so, the humbled state, was noisy, an horrible pit, to Jesus Christ. In it he heard the curses of the holy law ; the demands of his Father’s justice, thundered, as from mount Sinai, against him. Taken by the throat, as his people’s surety and cautioner, he practically heard these alarming sounds, “ Pay what thou owest.” He heard likewise a noise from earth, while men set their mouths against him, in strains of irony and contempt ; “ All they that see me laugh me to scorn, they shoot out the lip, they shake the head ; many bulls have compassed me about, strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round ; they gaped upon me with their mouths, as a gaping and a roaring lion,” Psa. xxii. 7, 12, 13. “ When I wept and chastened my soul with fasting, that was to my reproach ; I made sackcloth also my garment, and I became a proverb to them ; they that sit in the gate speak against me, and I was the song of the drunkards,” Psa. lxxix. 10, 11, 12. Nor did

our Lord, in the pit of his humiliation, only hear a noise from heaven and earth, but likeways from hell. He had immediate personal rancounter with the wicked one ; particularly, in the wilderness of Judea, where Satan tempted him with the most guileful and impious words ; and besides his hearing that grand adversary speak out of wicked men ; he heard him, on a certain occasion, speaking out of his own disciple and servant ; obliging the meek Emmanuel to spurn that apostle from him, with a " Get thee behind me Satan."

S E C T. II.

The mire in the bottom of such a pit, cistern or basin, yielding and giving way to the person's feet placed in it ; so as he does, and must, inevitably, however gradually, sink downward, exhibits the plainest intimation of our Lord's circumstances in the pit of his humiliation. No sooner was he born at Bethlehem, than he found the sinking, suffering, nature of the state upon which he had entered. His harmless feet at once dipt into the mire of suffering ; as his holy head was dashed with torrents of wrath : in the same proportion as the engines of his Father's vengeance blazed upon him, did his suffering, or sinking in this mire, grow and encrease. This fatal, but to sinners joyful, truth will appear to demonstration, could we trace him from Bethlehem's manger to mount Calvary, and follow him, from the first to the last breath he drew in our world.

The Man Christ was no sooner separate from his mother's womb, than the mire, in which he stood, began to give way. He was not so much as furnished with a proper and decent lodging, could not be allowed the common privilege of a bed, couch,

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or cradle, whereupon to stretch his infant limbs. A stable was the only house, and a manger the only apartment, our world had to bestow upon this heavenly stranger, when an infant of days. "Mary" (says the evangelist) brought forth her first born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn," Luke ii. 7. Well was the circumstance of an inn suited to the character of the Man Christ, who on earth was a stranger, and from first to last treated as such. But was there no room for him? did the inn open its gates to receive others, of mixed, indifferent, or even ignoble characters; and shut them upon the innocent, the spotless, and the blameless Saviour? were others, under whose iniquities the earth groaned, accommodated with every thing necessary, perhaps, with many things superfluous; and could he, of whom the world was not worthy, find no better accommodation, than that of a stable and manger? O what sinking in the mire was this! that he, who, from everlasting ages, dwelt under the immediate canopy of uncreated glory, was now obliged to retire for shelter, from scorching heats and nipping colds, under the same roof with oxen and asses: that he to whom the palaces, the ivory palaces, in Emmanuel's land belonged, should be thus reduced, to dwell in a low, grovelling and uncomely hut. While our Lord was a tender suckling, the mire in which he stood continued to give way. As there was no room for him in the inn, it soon appeared there was no safety for him in his native land: ere ever he had well breathed our air, plots were laid against his precious life; ere ever he had acquired any friends among men, unknown enemies way-laid him, in order to his destruction; which rendered a speedy flight from Bethlehem necessary; nay, obliged his

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supposed father, to translate him from the land of Judea entirely, and to enter, for a time, into voluntary exile and banishment. "Behold (says the " evangelist) the angel of the Lord appeared to " Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the " the young child, and his mother, and flee into " Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee " word; for Herod will seek the young child to " destroy him. When he arose, he took the young " child and his mother, by night, and departed in- " to Egypt: and was there until the death of He- " rod," Matth. ii. 13, 14, 15. What could ail thee, O Bethlehem! what ailed thee O Judea! what meant thy madness, O Herod! thus to persecute the blessed stranger, and so quickly to dislodge the heavenly guest. Not only did the Jews at Beth- lehem refuse him access, and the land of Judea spue him out; but, as if the earth itself had been wholly in league against its rightful Sovereign, a fixed habi- tation was absolutely denied him. You have already seen him hurried from one nation to another; and if you will follow him in his weary pilgrimage be- low, it will appear how he was hunted, chased, pursued, and sometimes obliged, of his own accord, to retire from place to place, from one city and vil- lage, or it may be from one mountain and desert place, to another. When he was informed of the Baptist's death, " he departed thence by ship, into " a desert place apart," Matth. xiv. 13. When the Pharisees were offended at his ministry, they said unto him, " Get thee out and depart hence," Luke. xiii. 31. and when the Gergesenes under- stood that he had permitted the devils to enter in- to their swine, " they besought him that he would " depart out of their coasts," Matth. viii. 34. But our Lord's own account of the matter is vastly more expressive and emphatical than all such particular

particular instances, gathered from his history. "The foxes have holes, (said he) and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head," Matth. viii. 20. no house, no home, no dwelling, or settled abode. Instead of a fine and splendid palace, the spangled heavens were often his only canopy; instead of a downy bed, the wilderness was his frequent couch, and the fastned, but rugged stones his then pillows. Was it strange to see a man of Jacob's worth, as well as wealth, lying in this posture, between Beer-sheba and Haran? But how much more surprising to see Jacob's Lord reduced to equal, if not greater straits. O earth! why so shy and unfriendly, when the Lord of heaven, as well as earth, needed and desired a comfortable dwelling place? why so liberal to the wicked and prophane, and yet so unaccountably reserved toward the holy One of God? wherefore thus furnish the worthless with your choicest apartments, and deny him who is thrice worthy, an agreeable *where* to lay his weary head? As the world refused him lodging, so at times, it denied him subsistence; for "having fasted forty days and forty nights he was afterwards an hungred." Matth. iv. 2. and when stretched upon the accursed tree, he said, "I thirst," John. xix. 28. Strange! does the world and the fulness thereof belong to the Lord? are the cattle on a thousand hills his own? is it under his influence that corns grow, and waters break out? is the whole creation sustained by the continued exertion of his bounty? and could no crumb of his own bread, no drop of his own water, be produced, when, in this sinking mire, he groaned and panted for want! why so exuberant the breasts of the creatures to others, and yet yielding no supply to him? Besides, in the world, his character was undermined, and, how far in the power

of his enemies, quite overturned. They not only, twitted him with the supposed meanness of his birth, saying, "Is not this the carpenter's son?" Matth. xiii. 55. but represented him as a most dangerous person to society, both in a civil and religious view; as an enemy to Cefar, an enemy to the temple, and, of consequence, an enemy to that God by whom Cefar reigned, and by whose glory the temple was filled. "We found this fellow (said they) perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cefar," Luke xxiii. 2. and reviling him upon the cross, they said, "Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself," Matth. xxvii. 40. In fine, our Lord in this mire sunk deeper and deeper, as, under his sufferings, both his body and spirit gave gradually way. As to the former, Isaiah spoke as if he had seen him in person, when sinking in the mire of the horrible pit: "His visage was so marred (said he) more than any man, and his form, than the sons of men," Is. lii. 14. accordingly the Pharisees seem to have considered him as near twenty years older, than he really was, when they said, "Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?" John viii. 57. And with respect to his spirit, it is abundantly plain from his whole story, that it proportionally yielded under the oppressive, unbearable load of his suffering. What else could be the meaning of his sighs, groans, cries, sorrows, and griefs, alternately interspersed with every period of his continuance in the horrible pit and miry clay?

The mire in the bottom of such pit, cistern or bafon, not only yields, but holds. There is not only no standing in it, but no escape from it, being a miry, sticking, entangling clay. Which serves to inform us, that though, in his humiliation, our Lord was not compelled, but intirely chearful, yet he

was

was held in the mire of the pit, until the time specified by the covenant, for his deliverance from it. The Father's will had a very holding influence upon him; as a motive full of power; a motive, the force whereof no circumstance could break. Having said, "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me: I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart," Psal. xl. 7, 8. having said so, he not only could not, in point of obligation, but would not in point of choice, refuse or go back. "The cup (said he) that the Father hath given me, shall I not drink it," John xviii. 11. and again, "Father, if this cup may not pass from me, except I drink it, thy will be done," Matth. xxvi. 42. The honour of his Father's law held him in this miry clay: the requisition of suffering and obedience, made by it, was so supported by divine justice, that it was impossible, in any consistency, with regard to these, for him to do otherways than abide in that mire, sinking and dangerous as it was, until both should say, It is enough. For "he came, not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it," Matth. v. 17. not only to fulfil the demands of the law, in way of obedience; but to secure the honour and majesty of it, by suffering what ransomed sinners, through disobedience, would have otherways been subjected unto. The salvation of his people was another circumstance, by which the feet of Christ were held in the mire of the pit. His errand was to seek and save them, as lost sinners, Matth. xviii. 11. Nothing less than doing and suffering, to the whole extent of what the will, law and justice of the Father required, was sufficient to reach that noble, necessary and generous end: and therefore, as he loved them; as he commiserated their situation; as he willed their reco-

very ; as his *whole* heart was set on their *whole* redemption ; and as he was determined, that no soul the Father had given him, should be lost ; his *sinking* as well as *sinking* in the miry clay, was quite inevitable. His own honour was a crowing circumstance, by which our Lord's feet were held fast in this clay, while they sunk deep into the mire. He had said it, and therefore would not, could not, go back ; he had sworn it, and therefore it was impossible for him to make enquiry ; and as in the faith of his doing as he had said, the Father had, for some thousands of years before the fulness of the times, been continually saving sinners, and receiving them to his glory ; his sense of honour, and regard to his covenant engagements, were too delicate and strict, to leave the smallest possibility of his failing, in the least iota, of all he had undertaken to do and suffer. Nay, so much did he enter into the spirit of his work, and keep the ends of his humiliation in view, that, until all the prophecies concerning his sufferings were accomplished, he could not, would not, leave the miry clay ; for when at the very point of death, ready, just ready, to expire, "*That the scriptures might be fulfilled*, he said, I thirst," John xix. 28. The scripture to which our Lord then referred, is written in the lxix psalm and 21 verse, in these words, "They gave me gall for my meat, " and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." Had it not been out of more regard to the fulfilment of the holy scriptures, than to the gall and vinegar, it is certain, the bleeding Lamb had not thus expressed himself ; but he knew that this, as well as other prophecies, behoved to take place ; and therefore was held in the mire of the pit, until the homely sponge was presented, and the dreadful potion received ; when, in the language of inspiration,

spiration, he could, with respect to all that was written in Moses, the prophets and the psalms, concerning him, say "It is finished," John xix. 30. To all this it may not improperly be added, that our Lord's future reward, as Man Mediator, had its own influence on keeping him in this miry clay, until he had finished the work and warfare to which his approaching reward had a respect; "Who (in the words of the apostle) *for the joy that was set before him*, endured the cross, despising the shame," Heb. xii. 2. But,

However long a person, literally, in such a pit and mire might live, in the nature of the thing, he behoved to die there; beautifully and significantly pointing out the death and burial of Jesus Christ. For, however long he weathered out the storm, it overcame him at last. The waters of wrath rushing down overflowed him; and the miry clay continuing to yield, buried him. The first of these, in the sacred page, is expressed by his "giving, or yielding, up the ghost," John xix. 30. The human soul and human body of the heavenly Man were fairly parted. He that went continually about doing good, lay a pale, breathless, and exanimate corpie: his tongue, that spake as never man did, was silenced: his eyes, that never beheld the needy with indifference, were closed: his hands, so often employed in offices of kindness, lo! they fall down all lacerate and torn: his feet, that never failed to carry him about his Father's business; behold them gored with blood, and gashed with nails! his sacred temples, see how they bleed from countless pores! while streams of blood bespattering his other members, and staining all his raiment, flow from his sacred side! and to deepen the awful tragedy, you cannot but observe, how his murderers turned him out of his
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very garments, and made a prey of his clothing. Ah! is this naked, this wounded, this mangled and outcast piece of clay, the very Jesus of Nazareth, so mighty once in word and deed! Yes, my brethren, there and thus he lies, but lies as the covenant representative of lost sinners; nor could it be otherwise, since he trode the wine-press of the Father's wrath alone. See, see, the victim falls! the sacrifice slain! the scene of life, as to him, in a suffering capacity, closed! and to crown the whole, the curtain of the grave, by and by falls! For as he died, so the evangelists assure us he was buried; was decently wrapped up in clean linen, conveyed to Joseph of Arimathea's family tomb; laid in a new niche of the rock, never before stained with dead bodies; and shut in by a great stone rolled to the mouth of the sepulchre. But, do ye not see these daughters of Jerusalem following the solemn procession, clothed in sable weeds, and drenched in floods of tears? do ye not hear his mother sobbing out a grief, too big for utterance? while her companions in sorrow, Mary Magdalene, and other great debtors to free grace, can only express their tender feelings by sighs and groans. But hark! what meant that horrid crash, and what yonder universal gloom? The earth shook, my brethren, the rocks rent, and the sun, for a time, hid his face; all nature appeared in mourning robes, from the sixth to the ninth hour of the day; and no wonder, when he, who in his divine character, was, is, and continues the God of universal nature, suffered, and suffered unto death.

S E C T. III.

From the two preceeding sections, true Christians cannot do otherwise than infer the love and
grace

grace of God their Saviour. You see the price of your redemption, the value Jesus Christ put upon your salvation, paying so much for it; the wrath you were subjected unto, are now delivered from; together with the vastness of that mercy, by which you are secured from such vast wrath. Since you were naturally the children of this wrath; since you would still have been exposed to it, if not actually groaning under it, had not the Mediator seasonably interposed; since being under no obligation, arising from sinners themselves, to undertake this labour of love, he might have left the whole apostate family to wander and perish for ever; and since, while others are lying under the cloud of wrath, you are distinguished by his grace; does it not follow, by the most natural and necessary consequence, that you are bound to view these things, into which angels themselves desire to look, with wonder, joy and gratitude? to aim at expressing your high thoughts of redeeming love, by the exercise of humble praise, firm, believing and stedfast obedience; and at expressing them, by a generous concern for the souls of others, exposed to wrath, and yet insensible of their danger, and unaffected with it. Help them therefore, by your prayers, advice and example; do every thing within your sphere, in a dependence on grace, to draw them from beneath the impending cloud of the wrath of God; or, in the words now under consideration, to draw them out of the horrible pit and miry clay. Nor cease to pray for those, whose province it is to labour in word and doctrine, that they may be endowed with holy skill, divine sagacity, and blessed success, in their ministerial endeavours, after the recovery of lost sinners.

From what was the situation of the Man Christ Jesus, when acting in the room of sinners, the pre-
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sent situation of the unconverted and unholy may, with equal propriety, be inferred. You are in the horrible pit of unregenerate nature, and thence, under the hovering, swelling, and, for what you know, rent cloud of divine wrath. In such wretched state, there is no curse, threatening, or word of terror, in the whole book of God, but what are all pointed as arrows settled in the bended bow of Jehovah's justice, against your guilty, your devoted heads. As in this cloud, under which you now ly, there is nothing but wrath without mercy; so that wrath is daily dropping upon you, though you know it not, while in the pit of a natural state. It falls on your food and raiment, on your prosperity and adversity; it falls upon you in your outgoings and incomings: it is particularly dispensed, in that hardness, unbelief and impenitency of heart, with which you are bound under the means of grace; and dispensed, in that untenderness, unfruitfulness and unholiness, in your lives, which without remorse, at least without reformation, is your habitual disgrace and reproach: and, if not delivered out of the horrible pit of an unregenerate state, this cloud will break, this wrath will fall, and, in falling, crush you soul and body, down, down, down, to the *more* horrible pit of anguish and despair. Did Jehovah, the Father, not so much as spare his own Son, when acting as a common person, but pour out his wrath to the uttermost on him; and can it be imagined, that living and dying in the practical contempt of the gospel way of recovery, he will spare you? Awake, awake then, O sinners; read the nature of sin and wrath in the sufferings of Christ; and look for freedom from the one, and exemption from the other, through him, in whom only the Father is well pleased. Are your eyes shut as
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AND CROWN.

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to the views of your state, guilt and danger? so far from being a promising symptom, you may consider that one circumstance as a pregnant evidence, the cloud of wrath is dropping, and dropping fast, upon your souls. Cry therefore to the Lord, that he may awaken and convince, wound and kill you, in order to your being effectually healed, and made alive; before the decree bring forth, and all possibility of it be cut off.

P A R T II.

Of the REDEEMER'S Exaltation and Crown.

C H A P. I.

Of the Father's inclining unto him, and hearing his cry.

S E C T. I.

THE Father's inclining unto the Man Christ seems, at first sight, to be an expression of his love to him, and of his loving him with a love, in kind and degree, infinitely surpassing what angels or men are partakers of. "Then (said the "Messiah, namely, when Jehovah appointed the "foundations of the earth) I was by him, as one "brought up with him; and I was daily his de- "light, rejoicing always before him," Prov. viii. 30. "Thou lovest me (said he to the Father him- "self) before the foundation of the world," John xvii. 24. and to prove that the Father's love to him did

did not cease, upon his being manifested in the flesh; it was, once and again, proclaimed from the excellent glory, That Jesus Christ was his beloved Son, Matth. iii. 17.—xvii. 5. As the Father loved, so, of course, he honoured him, and honoured him by bearing such witness to him, as procured him honour and esteem, worship and veneration, from saints, and sometimes from sinners themselves. As the evidence of his Father's presence, countenance and approbation, always accompanied his person, ministry and miracles; so they contributed much toward his authority being established, his report believed, and his cause espoused. "If I honour myself (said he to the Pharisees) my honour is nothing, it is my Father that honoureth me, of whom ye say that he is your God," John viii. 54. and said the apostle, "He received from God the Father, honour and glory; when there came such a voice from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," 2 Pet. i. 17. Nor were these words whispered into the Saviour's ear, but spoke in an audible manner, that, by this expression of complacency, the Father might put honour upon him. For "this voice (said he) which came from heaven, we (namely, Peter, James and John) heard, when we were with him, in the holy mount," 2 Pet. i. 18. The Father kept a constant eye upon the Man Christ: from his conception to his birth, from his birth to his death, from his death to his resurrection from the dead, he never lost sight of him; but noticed him with peculiar approbation, attention and care, through all the different steps of his humiliation, in all the different periods of his sufferings; and did so as a loving father, even when laying his awful hand upon him as a tremendous judge; did so, as a faithful

ful God, even when, in respect of comfortable presence, he was far from the words of his roaring, and forsook him. "The eyes of the Lord (says the psalmist) are upon the righteous," Psal. xxxiv. 15. where it is more than probable the Messiah was in the prophet's view; because, in the 20th verse of that psalm, it is said of the same righteous person, "He keepeth all his bones, not one of them is broken;" evidently alluding to the paschal lamb, an eminent type of Christ, concerning which the Lord said to Moses, "Ye shall not break a bone thereof," Exod. xii. 46. which was literally accomplished in the Messiah, when "the soldiers brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him, and broke not his legs," John xix. 32, 33. Nor are we left to mere conjecture, in the application of these Old Testament passages, to this New Testament occurrence; for the evangelist expressly informs us, "These things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken," John xix. 36. The Father not only kept his eye upon the Messiah, but kept his hands about him, charged his providence with his preservation, employed angelic ministers to wait upon him; and, in that way, secured his harmless, holy, human nature, from every accident, evil and inconvenience, not included in his mediatory obligations to endure; and secured him, even from such sufferings as were incumbent on him to bear, until the particular time fixed for that particular purpose, so as it was impossible for devils or men, to precipitate his death a moment before the period agreed unto in the council from eternity. "He shall give his angels charge over thee, (said the psalmist) to keep thee in all thy ways; they shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot
" against

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"against a stone," Psal. xci. 11, 12. which was by the devil himself acknowledged to respect Jesus Christ, when, in tempting him, he quoted and applied it, Matth. iv. 6. Nor did the Father only preserve the Man Christ in a negative view, but actually ministered assistance and consolation to him, in the manner and measure his circumstances, as a man of sorrows and acquainted with griefs, required. When the devil left him in the wilderness of Judea, "Behold, angels came and ministered unto him," Matth. iv. 11. and when he wrestled in the mount of Olives, under the wrath of his Father, "there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him," Luke xxii. 43. Moreover, the Father's inclining to him is expressive of his being well pleased with his service; with the discharge of his trust, as Mediator; with the performance of his covenant obligations, as the kinsman Redeemer of sinners: and so much pleased with him, that he beheld, does, and will behold others, with a pleasant countenance, for his name's sake. Not only has Jehovah, once and again, declared him to be his beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased; but the apostle has assured us that, through grace, the Father "hath made us accepted in the Beloved," Eph. i. 6. in other words, hath accepted sinners, because of his complacency in the mediatory interposition of the Saviour.

S E C T. II.

The Father not only inclined unto the Man Christ, but heard his cry. Our Lord had always ready access to the Father; an immediate audience in the presence chamber was always granted him, and he had an exclusive privilege of approaching the
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the divine presence immediately in person : nay, it would seem, the Father waited for him, until he made such approaches to him ; for as his eyes are upon the righteous, so “ his ears are open to their cry,” Plal. xxxiv. 15. Not only was perpetual access ministred to the Man Christ ; but, on his approach, the Father hearkened to his suits and supplications, however great and numerous, whether personal or relational. He gave him all encouragement to make his whole requests known, never failed of hearing him to the last ; and, as if regardless of every thing else, he noticed the breathings of the Mediator’s soul with peculiar attention and delight. What our Lord himself is represented as saying to the church, may, with all manner of safety, be applied in the present case ; as an expression how much the Father desired to hear the Redeemer’s cry, while he attended unto it ; “ Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice,” Song ii. 14. Nor was the cry of the Man Christ only waited for, and attended unto, but entirely approved of, by Jehovah. The Father approved of his cry, as to the matter of it, petition, adoration, or thanksgiving ; as to the manner of it, by words, sighs, tears, groans, roarings, or otherways ; as to the source of it, the heart of a Son, an only, and, at the same time, a dutiful Son, and an obedient Son ; as to the motives of it, confidence in his Father, and love to his people ; as to the ends of it, his Father’s glory, his own reward, and his people’s salvation : and the Father approved his cry, as to the arguments he used in it ; the Divine Faithfulness, and the Merits of his own obedience. His cry was delighted in, as well as approved of by the Father. The Father delighted in Jesus Christ himself, and thence, in all he said, did and asked. “ I was by
“ him

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"him (said the Son of the Father) as one brought up with him, and I was daily his delight," Prov. viii. 30. If so, when only undertaking to do his will; how much more behoved he to be so, when actually engaged in his work? In consequence of all, the Father complied with Christ's voice, granted all his requests, answered all his demands, fulfilled all his desires, did all for him, in a personal or mystical view, he prayed for: nay, there is such an oneness between the Father's everlasting will of grace, and the Mediator's *every* cry, that in answering the latter, he only accomplisheth the former.

S E C T. III.

Since Jesus Christ, in person, waited for the Father, and cried to him; his members, the spiritual seed of Israel, will, ought, and must, do so. The Redeemer's waiting and crying is an example for them to imitate, an original for them to copy after. At the same time, his having done so, is the only ground upon which they may expect to do so with success and comfort. The Lord Jesus and believers, being mystically one; he the head, and they the members; he the vine, and they the branches; he the foundation, and they the fabric; their waiting and crying will be considered by the Father, as if he in person was the servant and suppliant. He waited and cried in the quality of their head; they wait and cry in the quality of his members: and therefore, if the Father inclined to Christ, and heard his cry; he will incline to them, and hear their cry. In noticing the head, he regards the members;—and in regarding the members, he notices the head:—nor will our Lord fail, according

according to this view, to consider what the Father does to his people as if done to himself.

The salvation of believers having been wrought out in the Redeemer's humiliation; however faulty and defective your services, it is delightful to know that the service of Jesus Christ in your stead was perfect and immaculate. Though you are ill pleased with yourselves; though your own hearts condemn you; and though you see God the Father would be just in executing the sentence of condemnation against you: yet your encouragement lies in Christ being accepted, and in your acceptance being secured through him. Though your own cries and prayers deserve not access nor answer; your Lord's cry is full of merit; big with success; and, to you, pregnant with manifold blessings.

If, therefore, you see the right Jehovah has to perfect, universal, perpetual obedience, from you as creatures; the impossibility of your yielding such obedience as the law requires; that God would be just in pleading a controversy with you as rebel sinners, in casting off your persons, rejecting your services, and being angry against your prayers: if you see your incapacity of atoning past offences, or performing future obedience; of paying your debt of duty or suffering; of procuring redemption in a negative, or purchasing salvation in a positive, view: if you see a fitness and propriety in the person and mediation of Christ, for reaching the ends of your recovery upon honourable terms: if you admire the grace, wisdom and love, of Jehovah Redeemer, in the contrivance and execution of that wonderful redemption: if you prize Jesus Christ; approve of him, in way of desire; follow after him; and wish, above all things, to be saved through his waiting for the Father, and crying to him: if you would chearfully and joyfully be rendered

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dered debtors to Divine Grace, Sovereign Mercy ; if you are driven from every other dependence for salvation ; if you are enabled to hang about the Lord's hand, in the duties, means, and ordinances, of his appointment : then there is reason to hope good things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation ; to hope your interest in these blessings, and those privileges, arising from the Father's attending to Christ, and hearing his cry, is real, scriptural and indubitable.

Are you saying, My experience of a law-work has never been distinct and observable ; I know nothing of such awakenings and terrors as others, of whom I have read, with whom I have conversed ; and thence, any encouragement I would take from the mediation of Jesus Christ is at once marred ; my hopes, arising from thence, are perpetually shaken ? The Lord is sovereign as to the degrees of such a law-work : in that respect, he keeps no beaten, common tract. The great matter is, to have such experience of your natural obligations to the law, as convinces you of the absolute need of Christ. If that is the case, the end of the law is so far reached ; and you do well to encourage yourselves in the Lord, as having waited for the Father, and cried unto him.

Are you saying, My acquaintance with the comfortable parts of religion, the bright side of the cloud is so small, transient and inconsiderable, that I know not what to make, what judgment to form, of the case ? You should remember that gladness is only *sown* for you ; this is but your seed-time, and, it may be, a seed-time of tears and sorrow : the harvest of your joy and consolation will not be fully ripe, how long your connection with mortality lasts. What intervals of joy others have, are *only the first fruits* ; and though these be denied
you,

you, the full harvest will be so much the more ravishing and delightful. If you are aiming at falling in with the Lord's device of saving sinners, groaning under unbelief and unholiness, and aspiring after more acquaintance with the Lord, and conformity to him; you are, doubtless, sowing in tears, and shall therefore reap in joy.

Are you saying, I see such unlikeness in me to Christ, in his waiting for the Father, and crying to him, that my fears are countless and unutterable. Not only do misgivings of heart fly in my face, but particular blemishes in practice witness against me: my unwatchfulness, untenderness, and unfruitfulness, are such, as blast my confidence, suck up my comfort, fill me with dread, make me go mourning, and cause me apprehend I shall go to the grave forrowing? Your complaints, in themselves, argue a tenderness of conscience, that is hopeful and promising. Your case has nothing singular in it. You are bound to bless God for such views of your hearts and ways; which are hid from the eyes of others. Your encouragement lies in the perpetuity and perfection of the Mediator's obedience; and, if that is the only quarter from whence you hope, seek, and wish for relief; there is no fear of a final disappointment.

But, are you still saying, May I, a poor prodigal, a chief sinner, a notorious rebel, against the crown royal and prerogatives of Jesus Christ; may I, who have lived long in the neglect of salvation, many years in the contempt of the gospel; who have spent my strength, bloom, and vigour, at least much of it, in the slavery of sin, and crying after things of nought: may the like of me entertain any hope from the Redeemer's waiting for the Father, and crying to him; any hope from the Father's inclining to the Mediator, and hearing his cry? Does

your enquiry flow from regret for what you have been and done? does it flow from a wishfulness and desire after interest in the mediation of Christ? then, sirs, there is hope in Israel concerning this thing. Yes; you, who have not hitherto waited for the Father, nor cried to him, in a suitable manner; you may, you should, hope in Christ, as the hope and Saviour of Israel. Who knows, but you were amongst these, in whose room he waited, for whose behoof he cried? who knows, but your present concern is the fruit of his cry being answered by the Father? You have good reason now, though never before, to knock at the door of mercy. Our Lord has been knocking many a day at the door of your hearts; and are you now set a knocking at the door of his grace? are you? then it is a hopeful sign that a mutual bargain is on foot; a promising symptom that a reciprocal opening will soon take place.

You who neither know, nor care, for these things, dying in your present situation; the Father, instead of inclining to you, will abhor you, lothe you, spue you out of his mouth, and tear you in pieces, when there shall be none to deliver. However neglectful of crying to him now, you shall cry, and not be heard; you shall make many prayers, and not be regarded; and shall meet with the same contempt from him, that his calls, offers, and tenders of mercy, now meet with from you. At present you have no security, that the wrath of God will be warded off a moment longer; no security, that you shall be another day, or hour, out of hell. Going down to the grave without interest in the Redeemer's cry, you'll meet him as the Lion, of the tribe of Judah, ready to devour and destroy you; you'll meet him with vials of vengeance in both hands; you will meet him, as the executor of
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the Father's Justice against them who know not God, and obey not the gospel; you will meet him, as an implacable, inexorable, enemy. Though you *will* not meet him now, coming in the Father's name to save; you *cannot* shun that future interview with him, when he shall come in the Father's Name, shall come revealed in flaming fire, to condemn you. Neither rocks nor mountains will then be able to screen your guilty heads; nor men nor devils, to deliver you out of his tremendous hand.

Saints should, upon the whole, be exhorted to admire and adore the grace of God your Saviour, in his waiting and crying; and the grace of God, his Father and your Father, in his inclining to him, and hearing his cry. Study the imitation of him, and dependence on him. Seek communion with him, and conformity to him.—Sinners should likewise be exhorted to fly to Jesus Christ, from the wrath to come. Your duty and interest conspire for enforcing the exhortation.

C H A P. II.

Of the Father's bringing up the Man Christ out of the horrible pit and miry clay.

S E C T. I.

THE Father raised up the Man Christ from the state of the dead, and raised him above the possibility of suffering or dying any more.

He raised him up from the state of the dead, restored him to life again, reunited his once parted soul and body, to be parted no more for ever. The resurrection of Christ, being a doctrine and event

of the highest importance to sinners, is clearly taught in the gospel ; and has often been supported by the most accurate and conclusive chain of argument. It is a topic wherein the most masterly pens have been frequently and honourable employed ; and a topic, on the belief and improvement of which our whole hope, and all our comfort, for eternity, hang. " For if Christ be not risen (says the apostle) then " is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain,"

1 Cor. xv. 14. In his sufferings and death, our Lord was only paying the ransom ; and unless he had survived that gloomy period, there could have been no evidence that the price was accepted, or the discharge procured. But lo ! the passage under consideration brings good news, news big with the resurrection of Christ, and therefore with the salvation of sinners. Did the angel, in the hearing of the eastern shepherds, upon our Lord's entrance in to the horrible pit and miry clay, did he say. " Behold " I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall " be to all people ; for unto you is born, this day, " in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ " the Lord ? " Luke ii. 10, 11. Did the seraphic songster thus hymn the birth of Jesus Christ ; and shall we cease to celebrate the memory of his resurrection from the dead ? Passing the numberless variety of proofs for this glorious event, through the New Testament ; we shall only take notice of the 24th chapter of Luke wherein it is once, again and again, mentioned with evidence. In the 31st vers. Cleophas, and another disciple not named by the historian, are said to have known him in the village Emmaus, known him to be the very Jesus whom the Jews and Romans, with wicked hands, crucified and slew ; the very Jesus who, the other day, bled, groaned, expired, and was sealed up in the heart of the earth. In the 34th vers. the eleven apostles,

apostles, and others who waited for the consolation of Israel, seem, from the testimony they had heard, to have been persuaded of the truth of this event ; for they said, " The Lord is risen indeed, and hath " appeared unto Simon." And in the 36th vers. they are all represented as having seen Christ standing in the midst of them, who, to confirm their faith, and to render their testimony concerning his resurrection the more valid, shewed them his hands and his feet, and allowed them to handle and see, that, with greater certainty, they might judge for themselves, and bear witness to others. As this was, doubtless, our Lord's view in being so particular, in causing them survey him with such scrutiny and exactness, so the apostle shews, that the transmitting a proof of his resurrection to posterity, was the end they were chiefly to keep in their eye. For, when about to elect one from amongst the brethren, to supply Judas's place in the college of the apostles, the reason assigned by Peter for this election was, that he might be witness with them of the Lord's resurrection, Acts i. 22.

But the Father not only raised up Christ from the dead, but raised him above the capacity of suffering or dying any more. According to the literal import of the figure under view, one might be taken out of such a pit and mire, and yet afterwards fall into the same, or equal danger ; or, if a criminal, he might commit such after faults, as should justly expole him to the same punishment : but as to a risen Christ, neither of these can possible have place. With regard to his falling into such a place of danger, his present abode, in the highest heavens, as Man-Mediator, absolutely secures him against it ; and with respect unto a legal subjection to punishment again, that is equally impossible ; for, " by one " offering," he has intirely reached all the ends of

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his undertaking, and thence rendered the repetition of his sufferings altogether unnecessary, Heb. x. 14.

S E C T. II.

As to the efficient cause of our Lord's resurrection, it was doubtless the power of God: and though his own power, as the second Person of the ever-blessed Trinity, and thence, co-equal with the Father and the holy Ghost, may, nay must, be considered as exerted and displayed in this important event; yet, for the justest reasons, the deed is ascribed in scripture to Jehovah, in the person of the Father. It was at the Father's instance, as the guardian of law and justice, that our Lord was first incarcerated in the pit of suffering, and then in the prison of death; and therefore, that the honour of the sufferer, the credit of the surety, and the absolution of sinners, might be as legal, as evident; it was proper, highly proper, he should be released at the same instance, and by the same authority. Nor could any thing short of the power of God, have effected this resurrection from the dead. For if created power cannot produce life at first, nor prevent death at last; no more can it possibly overcome death, and restore to life again. Accordingly, inspired writers ascribe the resurrection of Christ entirely to the power of the Father. Whom God " (says the apostle) hath raised up, having loosed " the pains of death," Acts ii. 24. or the cords and bands of death, as some read that phrase, *i. e.* those obligations by which Christ was under the necessity of suffering and dying; as if the apostle had said " Whom God hath raised up, having given back " the Mediator's bond of cautionry, amply discharged, into his own hand." Again, " This Jesus " (says the same apostle) hath God raised up, where-
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“ of we all are witnesses,” Acts ii. 32. And Paul not only speaks of the power, and the greatness of the power, but of the “*exceeding greatness* of the power of God, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead,” Eph. i. 19, 20.

With respect to the manner of the resurrection of Christ; though God might and could have done it without means or instruments, the probability is, that he employed the ministry of angels, as heralds detached from the throne, to loose this *wonderful* prisoner, with honour and solemnity. This seems to be pretty clearly pointed out, by the evangelist, when he tells us, that “an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone, and sat upon it,” Matth. xxviii. 2. He opened the prison of the grave; and, to show that it was no more to be shut upon the man Christ, he sat down on the stone, which was the door of the sepulchre, thereby making proclamation that he having in the Father’s name opened, no man, no devil, could or durst attempt to shut. From Mary’s account of what she saw in the sepulchre, the truth of this seems further evident. She “saw” (says the evangelist) two angels in white (by their livery, you will at once perceive whose servants they were) sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain,” John xx. 12. And from what Peter saw on the same occasion, one would think those divine messengers, those exact ministers, had even adjusted our Lord’s grave cloaths; not leaving the place, till they had disposed of them in a proper, regular and decent manner. “He saw (says the evangelist) the linen cloaths ly, and the napkin that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself,” John xx. 6, 7.

S E C T. III.

As to the time when the Father brought up the Man Christ out of the horrible pit and miry clay, it was certainly on the first day of the week, and on the morning of that day, being the third from his crucifixion. For Matthew tells us, our Lord's resurrection was expedited in the end of the sabbath, Matth. xxviii. 1. and Mark when the sabbath was past, Mark. xvi. 1. namely, the Jewish sabbath, or the seventh day of our week. Luke again, and John say, it was on the first day of the week, Luke xxiv. 1. John xx. 1. Nor do the evangelists less agree in this circumstance, that it was in the morning of that day. For Matthew says, it began to dawn toward the first day of the week. Mark and Luke say, it was very early in the morning of the first day of the week; and John says, it was when it was yet dark. It was thus early in that morning, that Mary Magdalene and others, upon coming to the sepulchre, missed the body of Jesus; and consequently his resurrection was still sooner, and more early, than their disappointment.

With respect to the space between our Lord's burial and resurrection, the evangelists likewise agree. They tell us when he was laid in the tomb, and when he was released from the bands of death; leaving every reader to count the interval for himself. He was buried on the evening before the Jewish sabbath, and raised on the morning after it. "It was the preparation, (says Mark, speaking of "the time of our Lord's interment) that is, the day "before the sabbath," Mark. xv. 42. In other words, he was buried on our Friday's evening, and raised on our Sabbath morning.

I am not unaware of an objection that naturally
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enough said here: How does it follow from this account, that according to our Lord's own prediction, *Matth. xii. 40.* he was "three days and three" nights in the heart of the earth? From according to the evangelists, it would seem he was only in the grave, one whole day, namely, the day of the Jewish sabbath: and two whole nights, namely, the night before, and the night after their sabbath. To obviate this difficulty, it need only be observed, That the natural day, consisting of twenty four hours, was, by the Jews, called a night and a day, or a day and a night; and that, in general computations, it is common to ascribe to a whole day what takes up only a part of it, as might be proved from manifold instances. Now, as our Lord was in the grave a part of three natural days, namely, a part of Friday, the whole of Saturday, and a part of Sabbath; according to the ordinary way of computation, he may justly be said to have actually lain in the grave three days: but this, in agreeableness to the Jewish idea of the natural day, behoved to be expressed by their own phrase, namely, three days and three nights.

S E C T. IV.

The Father thus brought up the Man Christ out of the horrible pit and miry clay, because he had promised to do it; and because, to lay it with reverence, in justice and equity, he was obliged to do it. With respect to the Father's promise of raising up Christ from the dead, manifold quotations, from Moses, the prophets and the Psalms, might be adduced; but as the apostle, in his sermon at Antioch, was express and explicit on this head, his words shall suffice. "We declare unto you (said he) glad tidings, how that *the promise,*

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which was made unto the fathers. God hath fulfilled the same unto us, their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again." Acts. xiii. 32, 33. Also the Father, mindful of his covenant, and anxious for his people, believed, in this respect, as we even as he are bid.

But as raised or brought up the Man Christ likewise, because of justice and equity, he was obliged to be a satisfaction upon full payment being rendered, with interest and of necessity, according to law, justice, and deliver a writ of liberation and discharge. But God, the righteous Father, he believed justice or equity, respecting his people's encounter and liberty of sinners? There is nothing in this effect necessarily implying, in a legal sense, a debt. "Whom God hath raised from the dead, being at Jerusalem (Jesus Christ) having been crucified for us." Mark what is said. "Secondly, it was not possible, that he should be raised up." Acts ii. 24. It would be too great a trial of wisdom and justice, that it was possible, without the greatest blasphemy, to suppose Jesus had the Father's justice of it.

SECT. V.

The manner of the trial will be very different from any's common estimate of it. It is predicted in word, and appears accordingly, to be the way, as was told down by Jesus Christ. Had not also the Father, who is represented in the Father's testimony, as is now to be imagined, he would, by the satisfaction of his Son in the Father's room, have made such early and early provision for it: and if our Lord Jesus had not judged the redemption of the soul precious, it is impossible to think, he would have laid himself under such weighty obligations,

gations, and subjected himself to such excruciating anguish and pain. The value of things amongst men is often judged of, from the importance of the price by which they are obtained; and as to particular commodities, their only value lies in the dearth of their purchase. Would we judge of the redemption of the soul by this rule, it will, on a double account, appear valuable, exceeding valuable and precious. It is not silver or gold that could procure it: its price is far above the price of rubies. Thousands of rams, and ten thousand rivers of oil, fall infinitely short of the lowest rate at which it could be bought. Nay, my brethren, the fruit of the sinner's body could, by no means, atone for the sin of the soul, far less pay for the redemption of it. The price you have seen: the awful sum has been told over in your presence, amounting to nothing less—than the blood of bulls and goats? no, the precious blood of the Son of God. Nor does the value of redemption ly merely, in the price paid for it; but also, in the need, the absolute, indispensable need all stand in of it: all, whether high or low, rich or poor, bond or free, must be interested in that salvation, to which our Lord's sufferings had a respect; must be interested in it, or must inevitably perish. Could we be instrumental in persuading men of the preciousness of salvation, one considerable end of our ministry would be reached; but how far men's usual preference to the things of time and sense argues an undervaluing their souls, it is easy to judge. Such need to consider, that in slighting your soul's redemption, you slight both the Purchaser and the price, both the contriver and the executor of it; which, if mercy prevent not, will expose you to the most awful reproof at the judgment of the great day.

The evil, the exceeding evil of sin, is likewise evident, as what nothing less could expiate, than our Lord's precious life. The eternal Father, who weighs persons and things in an even balance, could not do less to his bosom Friend, his everlasting Fellow, his constant delight, when set in the gap, than "bruise him and put him to shame;" to such open shame and sufferings, as he underwent in the horrible pit and miry clay. Sure, if the exceeding sinfulness of sin had not made it necessary, *such* a Father would never have made *such* exacton upon *such* a Son. And therefore, in making a sport of sin, men practically mock the suffering Saviour; in the pursuit and perpetration of sin, men make merry with that, which filled him with sorrow, even unto death. Nor can believers themselves survey their hearts and ways, without feeling, or having reason to feel, the most tender and affecting emotions. Your lying, my brethren, your sabbath-breaking, your uncleanness, your covetousness, your immorality and ungodliness in your unconverted days; together with such unbelief, unwatchfulness, unfruitfulness and backslidings from God, as, since grace took hold of you, you are chargeable with, dashed the head of Christ with wrath, when in the pit; and bore him down, till he sunk, died and was buried in the mire. Sin is evil in itself, unspeakably so, in the dishonour it does to the Lord God; but its evil nature appears most awfully in the scars on the Saviour's hands and feet; and in the remarkable scar on his sacred side; the indelible proofs of what sin cost him, and the dreadful evidence of what it shall cost sinners themselves, who live and die without an interest in him. If, while in the pit of humiliation, it drew wrath on his head, who had no sin of his own; can it fail of breaking the sluices of divine wrath, respecting sinners themselves,

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In the pit of nature now, and in the pit of hell hereafter? Yea sinners, though you roll this and the other sin, as a sweet morsel, under your tongues at present, it shall draw down whole floods of vengeance, upon you, soul and body, hereafter; under the load whereof you shall be pressed, crushed, tormented, and distracted through eternity.

But it is good news, that our Lord, was by the Father, taken up out of the horrible pit and miry clay; or, in the language of the New Testament, that he was raised from the dead. It is good news to saints. Primitive Christians are said, particularly glorying in the resurrection of Christ, to have frequently comforted themselves and one another with these words, *Sirs, Christ is risen*. No matter, my dear friends, though the grave-stone should be put on every other enjoyment and comfort; comparatively, that is of small consequence to you, since your Lord is risen; and, with him, your life, your hope, your liberty, your all. Besides, in *his* resurrection, there is full evidence of the work of your redemption being completed, and the most comfortable earnest of your own resurrection taking place, with glorious advantage, at the last day. As the resurrection of Christ is good news to saints, so it is pregnant with salvation to sinners; because in it they have the surest ground of hope to look to, and build upon. It is unquestionably certain, that, resting upon this foundation, you shall never be removed. Had our Lord been detained a prisoner in the grave, then you could have had no hope; had not these bands been loosed, your hands could never have been broken; but now, that he could not be holden of them, there is a solid bottom upon which you may build and warrantably venture for eternity. Be exhorted therefore to look to him, that you may be saved; and to wait for him,

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that ye may not be ashamed : for in neglect of this ground of hope, you dishonour and despise the Saviour, and lay in a foundation for his despising, and pouring contempt upon you. Think of these awful, awakening words, and pray that the Lord may write them, as with a pen of iron and the point of a diamond, upon your consciences : they are applicable to all the despisers of Christ, and neglecters of the great salvation. " Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken ; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder," Matth. xxi. 44.

C H A P. III.

Of the Father's setting Christ's feet upon a rock.

S E C T. I.

THE same nature that was humbled, is exalted. The *Man* Christ was in the horrible pit and miry clay, and it is only *as man* he can be said to be *set* on a rock. To suppose him capable of exaltation in his divine nature, would no less argue against the perfection of his divinity ; and be an error no less subversive of his glory, than if, as God, he had been supposed to suffer. In his divine nature, he was, from eternity past, so perfect and glorious, that, through eternity to come, it is impossible he can ever in any degree, be more so. Though, when the compliment of a ransomed world is fully made up, he will have still a greater number of admirers and adorers ; yet, even then, there will be nothing in the Redeemer's Godhead to admire and adore, which had not place, ere ever the

the creation of angels or men was expedient. So much is essential to the notion of that unchangeableness peculiar to the divine nature, as evidently taught in scripture; being "the same yesterday, to day, and for ever," Heb. xiii. 8. "without variableness or shadow of turning," James i. 17. And, what is unspeakably beautiful and comprehensive, being "from everlasting to everlasting God," Psal. xc. 2. When inspired writers speak of God, they convey the idea of a *Being*, in whom all possible, all imaginable perfection and excellence, beauty, dignity and glory, are summed up. But Jesus Christ, in his divine nature, was such a *Being*, from everlasting; and therefore, according to that emphatical text, he will, he can, be no more, *to everlasting*; which at once cuts off all such notions as would insinuate any rise or improvement in the circumstances and exaltation of Christ, as God: whence, in the exaltation pointed out here, we must confine our view to his blest, immaculate, but once suffering, human nature. Nor was our Lord only exalted, as the Man Christ; but in a common, covenant, mediatory capacity. In the horrible pit, he was pressed down by the load of wrath due to the sins of others; and, in his exaltation, he is possessed of the rights, blessings and privileges, purchased, provided and reserved for others. In his sufferings in the miry clay, he sunk all the sins of an elect world, as in the depths of the sea, never to rise up in judgment against them; and, in his emerging out of the grave, he brought up their peace, pardon and redemption, to be lost no more for ever. In this view, when our Lord speaks of his feet being set upon a rock; he speaks of the earnest and security therein exhibited, that all whom his humiliation respected, are virtually saved, in him, and shall, in due time, be actually possessed

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possessed of perpetual salvation through him. All the ransomed ones were federally exalted in their Head; though their full enjoyment of that triumph over sin, hell and wrath, be reserved to the time of their translation to Immanuel's better land, where glory dwells. He and they being one, in a mystical regard, what is said of him as the Redeemer, may be said of them as the redeemed; and what he did, suffered, deserved and procured, may be considered as if done, deserved, suffered and procured by them, in their own persons.

S E C T. II.

Our Lord's circumstances, as Man-Mediator, are now the reverse of what they were in his humbled state. Instead of being in a pit or dungeon, out of view, out of mind, inconsiderable and unobserved, his feet are now upon a rock, he is placed upon a glorious eminence, and set up in the most public, conspicuous, advantagious and honourable point of light. His divinity, formerly veiled, is now manifested and displayed, and, as united to his human nature, it shines forth with distinguishing splendour and magnificence. His human nature itself, is exalted to the highest pitch of beauty and perfection, whether in a moral or material view. In a moral view, the human soul of Jesus Christ bears the nearest resemblance, the greatest likeness, to the moral character and perfections of God, that the creature is capable of. The holiness of the most exalted angel, and distinguished saint, bears little or no proportion to that divine holiness wherewith his soul is embellished and adorned. And in our Lord's material beauty, as Man-Mediator, there is something so great, resplendent and majestical, that, according to the description given of
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of it by inspired writers, it is hardly possible to form any adequate idea of what it really is. We see what a noble and magnificent figure he cut, when he but tried on his resurrection clothes, on the mount of transfiguration; "his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light," Matth. xvii. 2. And we see the peculiar grandeur of his appearance to John in Patmos, "clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle; his head and his hairs white like wool, as white as the snow, and his eyes as a flame of fire: his feet like unto fine brails, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters," Rev. i. 13, 14, 15. Our Lord, as Man Mediator, is likewise eminent in respect of the place to which his present residence is confined, namely, the highest heavens, where is the glorious throne of the Father: he resides there, in the view of angels and glorified saints, beheld and admired by thousands of thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousands daily in waiting, and continually ministering, not only before the throne of God, but of the Lamb. Moreover, he is set on a glorious eminence, as he is held up on the pole of the everlasting gospel, to be viewed and improved by sinners of mankind. Under the Old Testament, men were directed to look to him, as to be manifested in due time; under the New Testament dispensation, they are called to look to him, as both come and gone, as one who is alive and was dead, and as one, whom, in his human nature, the Father has received into the most distinguishing mansions of bliss and glory. In the gospel, upon the pole of which he is exhibited, his divinity appears like that of the Father and the holy Ghost, universally diffused through heaven, earth and hell; but his
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human nature, as the most glorious workmanship of God, is represented as inhabiting the highest pinnacle of glory in all his Father's kingdom above.

Our Lord is now upon a solid bottom, in place of being in a miry clay ; so much is included in the notion of a rock, which gives not way to the feet of him who is set upon it. His present state is as sure, as it is eminent ; as impregnable, as it is altered : it is incapable of degenerating in itself, and proof against all attacks from his enemies of men or devils. Though their malice and resentment be radically the same, his present state baffles all their attempts, machinations, plots and designs : the rock on which he stands, they can neither sap nor scale ; the whole artillery of hell and earth is incapable of shaking, touching, or even reaching that glorious bottom of rest.

Instead of reproach and wrath, our Lord, as Man-Mediator, is surrounded with glory and happiness. He is both the darling and wonder of heaven, the delight and stay of angels and men ; the object of their adoration, as well as love ; of their praise and worship, as well as surprise and esteem ; while his person and performances are the burden of many songs peculiar to the Jerusalem above. Instead of wrath, happiness, ineffable happiness, and bliss, are continually poured on his sacred head ; not only all the happiness that the most capacious creature-vessel can hold, but all the happiness whereof He, as the infinite Jehovah, would be possessed. As he was peculiar, in respect of the nature and degrees of his sufferings ; so his happiness will be such as shall be peculiar, absolutely peculiar, to himself. It is, and will be, to the ransomed world, what the fountain is to the streams, or *the sun to the rays of light ; continually diffusing*
felicity

felicity to others, without being lessened, exhausted, or impaired.

Besides, the Man Christ, in his exalted state, is clothed with power and authority, in place of being covered with contempt, as was his lot in the days of his humiliation ; with the power of administration and government, of trial and judgment, of approbation and condemnation. All worlds, of all creatures, in all circumstances, are under his rule, subject to his controul ; and, as to the rational part of them, answerable at his bar. The government and kingdom, whether of nature, grace, providence or glory ; the authority over the creatures, whether angels, men or devils ; whether rational, or irrational ; animate, or inanimate ; visible, or invisible ; are intirely his own. In his divine nature, this doctrine bears no dispute ; but even as Mediator, the language of inspiration is plain to the same purpose. " All power is given " to me (said he) in heaven and on earth," Matth. xxviii. 18. and the apostle is very explicit on this head, when, he says, " Wherefore, God hath " highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name ; that, at the name of Jesus, " every knee should bow, of things in heaven, " things on earth, and things under the earth ; " and that every tongue should confess, that Jesus " Christ is *Lord*, to the glory of God the Father," Philip. ii. 9, 10, 11. Moreover, we are assured, by the same authority, That, as " God hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the " world ; so he will do it by *that man* whom he " hath ordained ; whereof (says the apostle) he " hath given assurance unto all men, in that he " hath raised him from the dead," Acts xvii. 31. and, by our Lord himself, that " the Father " judgeth

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“ judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son,” John v. 22.

S E C T. III.

This was all the doing of Jehovah the Father ; as, in the plan of redemption, there are particular parts the province of each Person in the Trinity. Strictly speaking, indeed, there is nothing done by Jehovah, in the Person of the Father, but may be equally said to be done by Jehovah, in the Persons of the Son and holy Ghost : yet, in a suitable-ness to our weak comprehensions, as for other ends, worthy of infinite wisdom and grace, there are different parts in the execution of the council of peace, ascribed to the different Persons of the Godhead : the purchase of redemption is ascribed to the Son ; and application of it to the Spirit ; as the contrivance of it is to the Father : so here, the reward bestowed on the Mediator, for “ his becoming “ obedient even unto death,” is attributed to the Father, whose Servant, in that capacity, he was.

Our Lord's exaltation is the doing of the Father, as, in the different parts of it, it required nothing less than the power of God to accomplish. If divine power was necessary to raise him from the dead ; to give him glory, and to advance him, in his human nature, to such an exalted pitch of honour and magnificence.

It was, likewise, the doing of the Father, as the powers with which Christ, as Mediator, is clothed, were originally in the Godhead ; were so much the province and prerogative of God, that it was competent for him to delegate and commission whom he pleased, to act in these exalted capacities. The creatures being all his, he might have ruled them by what instrument he chose, without leaving room to say, “ What doest thou ?”

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And it was the Father's doing, as, at a future, an appointed period, he will reassume the reigns of government into his own hand. Though they are now laid on the shoulders of Christ, it is only for a time; in the language of inspiration, "until the mystery of God be finished," Rev. x. 7. "when (as Paul expresseth it) the kingdom shall be delivered up to God, even the Father, and he be all in all," 1 Cor xv. 24, 28. The Father's committing all things into the hand of Christ, says, they were, originally, in his own; and the kingdom's being delivered up to the Father, says, it was formerly under his personal management, as was observed above.

S E C T. IV.

The change in our Lord's circumstances now, compared with what they were, in the days of his humiliation, is truly wonderful. Who would think, that the Glorious *Man*, in the midst of the throne, shining with a splendour which far outdoes the sun in his brightness, was the poor, afflicted and despised Jesus of Nazareth, who tabernacled, above thirty years, with men upon earth? who would think that the distinguished Person, enthroned with the Father, and encompassed with the praises of eternity, was the same Galilean, who was panned before a heathen tribunal, and treated, by Jews and Gentiles, with unsufferable contempt? who would take the living Lamb, in Immanuel's land, to be the very person, who bled, was torn, panted, and expired on the accursed tree? who could know that exalted Redeemer, as he appears in his Father's kingdom, to be *He* whom Joseph of Arimathea wrapped in clean linen, and interred in his garden at Jerusalem? Nothing will
either

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either surprise or delight the ransomed ones more, than the view of Jesus Christ as he is. For, after all they hear, read, think and believe, concerning his personal excellence and glory; upon seeing him, they will, as the queen of Sheba respecting Solomon be obliged to say, "the one half was never told," 1 Kings x. 7. the one half did we say? nay, in respect of what they will then see him to be, all their former discoveries will appear to have been but darkness, gross darkness and ignorance. The view of this *heavenly Man* will not only justify all they ever did and suffered for him, but probably fill them with wonder and surprise, because they will not then be capable of shame and remorse, that they loved, adored and served him so little; that they were so averse to suffering in his cause, and so unforward in such work and warfare as were connected, inseparably connected, with his honour and glory. The heavenly vision of Jesus Christ will fill the redeemed with delightful, rapturous amaze, that ever such an immaculate, matchless and glorious Master as he, took, and put up with, such low, ignoble, pitiful and worthless servants as they. But, if the view of this change in our Lord's circumstances will be such an agreeable and delightful surprise to the excellent ones of the earth; what, say my brethren, what will be the thoughts, and what the feelings, of unbelievers, upon this discovery! Those who now treat his authority in the gospel with the highest contempt; look on his servants and followers, as silly, credulous souls; consider his yoke, as an unsupportable burden; count his day, institutions and ordinances, a weariness scarce to be born; still more, who, avowedly act in opposition to him, his interests and people; O, what tongue can express, or thought conceive, the horror with which the first view

~~view~~ of the *exalted Man* will strike such infatuated creatures !

Our Lord's exaltation is an undoubted evidence, that all the family of faith shall likewise, in due time, have their feet set upon a rock, and, as far as they are capable of it, be made partakers with him of his glory. Your future circumstances, believers, of which your Lord's exaltation is the earnest, will be so different from your present, that you will not only, in a manner, be miskennd by others, but, one would think it almost possible, you will then misken yourselves. When set on the rock of glory and triumph, no remainders of your present imperfection, guilt and grief, pain and discouragement, temptation, fear and distress, shall have place ; and, when set there, your conformity to the *glorious Man*, in his exaltation, will be so great, as it is impossible for us now to say. Were you to have a *present* view of the appearance you will then make, it would certainly be more than the earthen vessel could well hold. If John, acquainted with the vision of the Man Christ, was in danger of falling down to worship at the feet of his fellow servant ; what strange impressions might such a discovery be supposed to have upon you ? Though " it doth not yet appear what ye shall be," let it suffice, that " when Christ, who is your life, " shall appear, ye shall be like him, for ye shall " see him as he is," 1 John iii. 2.

Moreover, the exaltation of Christ is a sure proof, as to his enemies, that they shall, in no ways, escape. The *God-Man*, whom ye now despise, is set above you, is constituted and appointed your Judge ; and will, sooner or later, have an awful reckoning with you. Every degree of opposition to him, and rebellion against him, will cast up, in that final, decisive process ; when, to your utter confusion

tant consequences of that trial to you. Be concerned to have provision for the time to come. Delay not, in a matter of such everlasting moment. The door of mercy is open; this Jesus stretcheth out his arms of grace in the gospel, to receive you: fly, fly, to him, as the ordinance of God for salvation. "Acquaint yourselves with him, and be at peace; that so good may come unto you." But, "because there is wrath, beware lest he take you away, with a stroke, when a great ransom shall not deliver you."

C H A P. IV.

Of the Father's establishing the Mediator's goings.

WITHOUT impropriety, this might be viewed as a phrase intirely synonymous with the former: for, as a rock is a solid bottom; when one's feet are set upon it, his goings, at the same time, are established; or, as some read it, made firm. However, we shall, in the following sections, consider this part of our Lord's exaltation in a different point of light, as expressive of the sphere in which he now moves, the capacity in which he now acts.

S E C T. I.

In our Lord's goings, he acts a part in heaven, where his residence, as the glorified Man, now is; and acts a part respecting the church militant below, and respecting the church triumphant above. As to the church, or churches, on earth, the part he acts in heaven, is as their Advocate and Intercessor with the Father. "If any man sin (says the apostle)

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"we

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"we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous," 1 John ii. 1. "who likewise (in the language of inspiration) ever liveth, to make intercession for us," Heb. vii 25. When on earth, he purchased all his people's blessings; and in heaven, he prays for the dispensation of them: when on earth, he wrought out a complete robe of righteousness for sinners; in heaven, he presents that righteousness to the Father: when on earth, he taught his people to pray; in heaven, he procures the acceptance of their performances, as well as persons. And, in the capacity of their Intercessor, our Lord manages the whole cause and interest of all his people, in such a manner as is suited to their respective needs.

With regard to the church in heaven, our Lord acts a part, as he, in conjunction with the Father and the holy Ghost, is the light, life, love, and liberty of the ransomed ones; through whom their happiness is more immediately communicated. Whence "the glory of God is said to lighten that city, and the Lamb to be the light thereof," Rev. xxi 23. and again, "The Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, is said to feed them," "and lead them into living fountains of waters," Rev. vii. 17. So that, heaven itself could be no heaven to them, were not the Mediator's goings known there. Besides, in his mediatory capacity, as exercised within the vail, our Lord is the bond of union between these respective bodies of militant and triumphant saints: through his goings there, the church below, and above, though different, in respect of place, are one and the same, in respect of their relation to the Father, and among themselves. God, being Christ's Father, is their common Father; and they, being equally the children of God, are brethren one to another. The elder Brother

Brother having taken up his residence in heaven, the whole family, in heaven and earth, are one. *His* personal possession of glory, at once, secures *their* continuing in a state of triumph, who are already with him; and *their* being brought to the same mansions of salvation, who are yet in the house of their pilgrimage. Were it not, thus, for our Lord's goings in heaven, neither of these valuable, important ends could be reached; and, consequently, neither the joy of the one, nor the other could be full. But this view of the Mediator is equally big with consolation, to all on earth or in heaven, within the bond, under the influence of the covenant.

S E C T. II.

In our Lord's goings, he acts a part in the world; by which, as distinct from his goings in the churches, to be afterwards viewed, we may understand the kingdom of providence, wherein saints and sinners are equally and mutually concerned. In this respect our Lord, as Mediator, and consequently, in his human, as well as divine nature, holds the reins, and steers the helm. He fixes the bounds of mens habitation, orders their respective lots, and determines concerning each, as to him, in sovereign wisdom, seems best. He raises up or casts down; he wounds, or heals; kills, or makes alive. He visits with peace or war, plenty or poverty, safety or danger, sickness or health, prosperity or adversity; without rendering, or being obliged to render, an account of his matters to them. In way of permission, if not immediate dispensation, nothing falls out, in nations, provinces, cities, villages, families, or to particular persons, without the Lord, as having the government upon his shoulders.

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Though, from the present conduct, and circumstances of numbers in the world, it would, to an inattentive spectator, look as if Jesus Christ, had little or no say in the management of human affairs; especially, from the power of his enemies, and oppression of his friends: yet these very providences are under his immediate direction, and *that* particular channel; because, upon the whole, most conducive towards the glorious ends, in which all are finally to terminate. Vice in prosperity, virtue in adversity, are phaenomena too intricate for human wisdom to reconcile with our Lord's goings on earth. But none, who pretend to faith of a divine revelation, will venture to argue from thence, that they are, indeed, irreconcilable. All these seeming paradoxes in our Lord's administration are to himself plain, obvious and consistent as they will, sooner or later, appear to have been angels and *men*, themselves, being judges.

SECTION III.

In our Lord's goings, as Mediator, he acts part in the churches on earth; by whom we understand the faithful, in a collective, ministerial or personal capacity. Collectively, the churches are all the members of Jesus Christ, scattered thro' the world; all renewed ones, pardoned sinners of whatever nation or denomination. Ministerially the churches are, all the office-bearers of the Lord's appointment, in *their* exertion of discipline and government, according to the pattern of the Old Testament. And Personally, the churches consist of every individual saint, whether he be a church officer, or member; whether amongst the pastoral or people; whether a ruler, or ruled; whether admitted to the communion of particular churches.

or excluded from it ; whether of necessity, or choice, deprived of church privileges.

The Lord's goings in the churches comprehend every thing he does in way of gathering, feeding, preserving, reviving, enlarging, comforting, chastising and beautifying them with his salvation. His presence is, to them, what the sun is to the natural world ; his influence to them, what the rain is to mown grass ; his blessing to their spiritual prosperity, what the cause is to its effects. While, under the withdrawals of his grace, they languish and decay ; when his stately goings appear, they " look forth as the morning, bright as the sun, " clear as the moon, and terrible as an army with " banners," Song vi 10. His goings in the churches as Zion's God and King, strike sinners with awe, fill saints with joy, and make all the assemblies, ordinances and institutions, peculiar to the churches, appear with uncommon solemnity, shine with distinguishing beauty, command singular veneration, and productive of the most surprising effects. Under the influence of his goings, darkness is dispelled, formality banished, deadness removed, error dismissed, defection ashamed, and all manner of spiritual diseases cured. In proportion only as the Mediator's goings are manifested, the churches appear and act in character as his spouse. How requisite, then, and how laudable, for them, to long for such exertion of his power, and displays of his glory, as have had place in times past.

S E C T. IV.

In our Lord's goings, as Mediator, he acts a part, likewise, in hell ; acts a part, respecting devils and damned spirits in the chambers of darkness. As his presence in heaven diffuses strength, joy, and

delight; so his presence in hell is the source of woe, terror, and despair. Over them he acts as the Law-giver and Law-avenger. That he acts as the Law-giver, is evident from the many miracles he wrought, in the days of his flesh, in restraining the powers of hell, and commanding them out of those possessed and tormented by them. So much were they under his authority, that, without leave, asked and obtained, they could not so much as enter a herd of groveling swine. "The devils besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine," Matth. viii. 31. and if he could give laws to them when on earth, is it to be imagined, he is less capable of it, in his Mediatorial character, now that he is in heaven?

And that our Lord acts, respecting these lost creatures, as the Law avenger, appears from the manner in which *those very* devils accosted him, on that occasion, in the country of the Gergesenes. When he commanded them to come out of the man, "they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time?" Matth. viii. 29. They knew him to be the Son of God, and understood, that, as such, he was appointed the Minister of heaven, in their damnation. In both these respects, he rules, and will continue to rule, that whole army of infernal locusts, and to rule them as with a rod of iron. These circumstances having place, when he tabernacled upon earth, is a sure indication, that the powers of hell are intirely subject to him, not only as God, but as God-Man.

Moreover, our Lord's majestic goings in, and over, the powers of darkness, appear with further evidence, from what he said, when manifested, in his mediatorial glory, to John in Patmos. "Fear not, I am the first, and the last: I am he that liveth,
and

" and was dead : and behold, I am alive for ever-
 " more, Amen; and *have* the keys of *hell* and
 " death," Rev. i. 17, 18. That he spoke there as
 Mediator, in his human, as well as divine nature, is
 more than evident from the words themselves;
 wherein, his death, resurrection, and glory, as man,
 are fully expressed. And, as such, you see, he
 has the keys of hell; implying his power of turning
 these keys, when, and upon whom, soever he
 pleaseth. The reprobate world, whether of men
 or devils, are all, by his awful, tremendous hand,
 shut up, in these prisons of despair. No enemy of
 God and the gospel sooner drops the curtain of
 mortality, than our Lord's goings are dreadfully
 expressed, in his turning the key of hell as well as
 death against them. Ere ever their clay-tabernacles
 be cold, their accursed spirits are wrapped up
 in flames, as in winding sheets of wrath, and that
 under sure ward, by the turning of this irreversible
 key.

S E C T. V.

Our Lord's goings, in all these respects, were
 established, by the Father, as Man-Mediator; for,
 as such only, his goings were, or needed, to be made
 firm. He acted, does, and will continue, to act,
 in virtue of a valid commission from the Father,
 representing the Deity, for these very purposes.
 That he was and is possessed of such a commission,
 is certain, from his acting in the capacities men-
 tioned; for no usurpation of power can, in the
 remotest way, be supposed, without reflecting,
 deeply reflecting, against the Father *permitting*,
 and the Mediator *practising*, it. But manifold
 scriptures put the truth beyond peradventure. " I
 " have *set* my King (says the Father) upon my holy

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" Hill of Zion ; I shall give thee the heathen for
 " thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the
 " earth for thy possession ; thou shalt break them
 " with a rod of iron, thou shalt dash them in
 " pieces, like a potter's vessel," P^{sa}. ii. 6. &c.
 again, " I have *exalted* one chosen out of the peo-
 " ple ;" and again, " I will also *make* him, my
 " first-born, higher than the kings of the earth."
 P^{sa}. lxxxix. 19. and 27.

Our Lord procured and acquired this commission
 upon the most honourable terms ; namely, as the
 reward of his obedience unto death. It is precisely
 in this light the apostle views it, when he says,
 " *Wherefore*," namely, as the reward due to his
 humiliation, mentioned in the preceding context,
 " God also hath highly exalted him." &c. Philip.
 ii. 9, &c.

And as our Lord's commission was legally ex-
 pecte, and honourably procured ; so it is amply sup-
 ported by the Father. He does nothing, in any of
 the respects mentioned, but the Father approves,
 corroborates, and confirms ; nor is it possible for
 him to do otherways, since our Lord executes his
 mediatory warrant intirely to his mind. Thus,
 speaking of his anointed by the prophet, the Father
 says, " With whom my hand shall be established ;
 " mine arm also shall strengthen him ; and, in my
 " name, shall his horn be exalted," P^{sa}. lxxxix.
 21, 24.

S E C T. VI.

How majestic, then, and how glorious, the
Man Christ Jesus ! Compared with him, now, what
 are all the puny princes, and what the petty po-
 tentates, among men ? whatever contributes to ren-
 der one great and venerable among the creatures,
 has

has place in Christ to the highest possible degree. But why speak of creature greatness, that, at best, is circumscribed by narrow limits? since his majesty and greatness know no bounds. Many have much to say in one corner of the earth, whose authority, in another, meets with no regard. Many bear considerable rule here below, who have no interest, no influence, before the throne above. None even of the sons of the mighty, can turn the helm, in the vessel of providence, to their mind; nor keep the gates of hell and death from opening upon them or their's. But our Lord's greatness and influence are equal in all places, at all seasons, and over all creatures. With what humility should we therefore approach, with what reverence adore, with what willingness obey, and with what cheerfulness, should we confide in him?

How great, of consequence, the safety, honour and happiness of those interested in the Mediator's friendship? There is nothing in heaven or earth best for you, he will not procure and bestow. Since his goings are so noble and majestic, and his influence so vast and extensive; you are sure, that whatever good your situation requires, shall be conferred and enjoyed, in the properest time, manner and measure. Are you unable to manage your own cause before the throne? his goings in heaven are suited to such a case; he praying for you, when you cannot, know not how, or what to pray for yourselves. Are your circumstances in the world trying, penurious and distressing? then know, *these* are the effects of his wisdom and love; and that it is because he sees trials and afflictions the greatest blessings you can, in your present circumstances, enjoy, those bitter galling ingredients are mixed up in your cup. Are you burdened for the low state of the churches, the declining interests

of religion, the formality, defections, errors and divisions, which have crept in, and are, in your views, like to gain ground; for the rareness of conversion among sinners, the smallness of reviving among saints; the awful backsliding among all, that have place? then our Lord's goings in the churches are grounds of comfort, at least, of humble silence, in such a case; for if he has work to accomplish, if he has elect seed to gather in, if he has designs of grace upon sinners among us, if our Zion is to be favoured, and if the time be come, he will not neglect his own business as Mediator. Are you afraid of death and hell, or afraid of coming short of heaven at last? these fears are all without foundation, since our Lord's goings, in these respects, are so manifest, and peculiar.

As a consequence of the whole, must not the situation of our Lord's enemies be perilous beyond expression? Continuing in a state of rebellion against him, you can expect no favour from heaven, no good on earth, no advantage from the churches, no exemption from death, no sanctuary from hell. Wherever you turn your eye, the Mediator presents you with frowns, meets you with displeasure, and way-lays you with curses. "Agree, therefore with thine adversary quickly, whilst thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison," Matth. v. 25.

P A R T III.

Of our LORD's Employment with the saved
Ones in Heaven, and of his Triumph o-
ver the Hearts of Sinners upon Earth.

C H A P. I.

*Of the new song of praise; with the Father's put-
ting it into the mouth of Christ, as Man-Media-
tor.*

S E C T. I.

THE object of this new song is, by the Mes-
siah, in the passage under consideration,
said to be *our God*. By the object of any song we
are to understand the person to whom it is ad-
dressed, about whom it is conversant, whether
compiled, modulated and performed, in way of
commendation, thanksgiving or worship, in any,
whatever view. Thus we know how the achieve-
ments of the great and enterprising have been ce-
lebrated in songs, both by the ancients and mo-
derns. But of *this* song Jehovah the Father is
more particularly the object, as he is the fountain
of the Deity, the original of all good, the sum and
centre of all perfection; to whom, from all the
creatures, worship is unquestionably due: whence
the creation, animate and inanimate, rational and
irrational, angelic and human, are often called to

[illegible]

The xxviii. psal
the earth, the sea, the mo
the earth, the dr
vapour, it
tree
creepin
of the earth, ar
legs of the earth
and children
songs

The persons to be worshiped in this song, viewed in this light, is a peculiar relative of God, who is himself God, intimate with God, and the representative of God. From the Father we learn that they are to be seen in him, that as the Father is God, so is he, and in this song, they are worshiped as God's witness; that although some of them were weak, or could accept of him as the Son of his humiliation, all of them had seen the glory of his victory and triumph, in the covenant and in the gifts of Jehovah, as his God and their God, our Father and their Father, so that as the object of this song, Jehovah, must be considered as a God of grace, a God to Christ, a God called and raised to elect men, through the glorious and triumphant Man. Besides, this relative view of God intimates, that although the Mediator be himself the object of all heavenly worship, considered in his divine nature, and considered even as God-Man; yet, in another point of light, he is a worshipper, and a worshipper of the Father, namely, as the head and elder brother of ransomed sinners; they in him and he in

in them, offer up one tribute, agree in one song, and sing in heaven, as one and the same person. Whence *that* song pointed at here is elsewhere called, "the song of Moses the servant of God, and "the song of the Lamb," Rev xv. 3. in other words, the song of the redeemed and the Redeemer, the mystical members, and the mystical Head.

S E C T. II.

This is a song of *praise* to our God, in which the glorified Head, with his glorified members, will be employed through eternity. Angels, indeed, and the spirits of just men made perfect, will not cease to praise the worthy Lamb, as well as the eternal Father and Spirit: but, in this mystical view, the Head *himself* will join the members in the high praises of God: they will praise him for what he is as God; for the independence, perfection and excellence of his nature; for the eternity and unchangeableness of his existence; in which respects, none of the creatures, the *Man* Christ *himself* not excepted, can compare with him,—be equalled unto him; he being, in *these*, removed at an infinite distance from all his votaries and worshippers. Praising God because *he is what he is*, will never be rightly understood by even his true and spiritual worshippers, as long as they are on this side heaven: but then, and there, led on, animated and inspired, by the presence and example of the glorious Man, their elder brother; this mode of worship will, at once, be learned and performed by the lowest and feeblest of them all.

The Redeemer and the redeemed will praise God for his ancient everlasting good will to sinners; for entertaining thoughts of love, peace and grace, to any of the *foreseen* rebel family of Adam. This cannot

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cannot fail to make a leading, essential part of the Mediator's song; because the Father's love was the source whence every thing respecting his mediatory character, office and glory, flowed: nor can it fail of entering into the song of a ransomed world, since to *that* original their whole blessedness, as the members of Christ, is radically owing.

They will praise God for the sovereignty of that love, for his pitching upon elect sinners, and, without any *creature* cause, distinguishing them from the rest of mankind. Of this our Lord gave a beautiful specimen when he said, "I thank thee, "O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because "thou hast hid these things from the wise and "prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. "Even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy "sight," Matth. xi. 25, 26.

They will praise God for his giving that selected company of sinners to the Mediator, and, by the covenant, substituting him in their room and stead. Of this donation our Lord made frequent mention when on earth; and there is no reason to think it will be neglected and overlooked by him when in heaven.

They will praise God for the whole clauses, conditions, promises and provisions, contained in the everlasting covenant. The Father will, to eternity, be acknowledged, as the blest contriver and author of that wonderful plan. If the Redeemer agreed to it, it was in consequence of the Father's proposal of it, who "*made* the covenant with his "chosen," Psa. lxxxix. 3. or *put* it unto him, for his approbation and acceptance, as some understand that phrase.

Finally, The glorious *Man*, with his glorified members, will praise God, even the Father, for all he has done, is doing, and will do, in consequence

quence of his obligations by the covenant, whether to the Mediator himself, or to those whom his generous mediation respected.

S E C T. III.

This is a *new* song. It is new, in respect of the blest songster, the Man Christ. For though he was God from eternity, and, as such, the object of worship, how soon there were creatures to admire and adore him; yet, in his human nature, as Man-Mediator, he never actually trode the courts of the Jerusalem above, until he was taken out of the horrible pit and miry clay; and of consequence, until then, Jehovah the Father was never celebrated by him in person within the veil: so that the song was new to him, and the worshipper new to the Father. It is a new song, as the Mediator, along with his mystical members, make up a new consort of heavenly music,—inimitable melody. Long before any of that ransomed company had a being, or their Redeemer was manifested in the flesh, “the morning stars (of angels and archangels) sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy,” Job xxxviii. 7. which, doubtless, made a most delightful harmony; and long before our Lord’s incarnation, many of the saved ones were joined in the sweetest consort before the throne above: but upon the Man Christ’s emerging out of the depths of death and wrath, and taking his place at the Father’s right hand, the divine consort was joined, or rather led, by him in person; which, as it must give life and add lustre to the whole, so, without impropriety, it makes it, on the matter, a new song.

It is a new song, as there are circumstances in the burden of it, that had not,—could not have place,

place, previous to our Lord's exaltation, as Man-Mediator. Though the saved ones, under the Old Testament dispensation, praised God in heaven, for having prepared a body for Jesus Christ, and for the promises of his manifestation and exaltation in due time; they could not praise him for Christ's actual triumph and personal glory, as man, until the blest event gave rise to it: whereas, on his arrival at the port of glory, this new circumstance was at once added to the song of the redeemed, in which *the* new songster, with peculiar elegance and vivacity, delightfully joined.

It is a new song, as, until "the mystery of God" be finished," there will be a continual accession of new singers. Upon the translation of every heir of promise the concert swells, and the melody rises: these birds of paradise, upon their enlargement from the clay tabernacle, mount up, and gladly mingle with the sacred throng. Thence, not only the number of praisers, but the occasion of praise, are perpetually increased, rendering the song always new. And,

It is a new song, as the object matter of it will never be fully explored,—can never be wholly exhausted; the ground of praise being infinite, eternity itself will be too short to utter it. Through countless,—endless ages, new beauties will arise, new excellencies appear, new discoveries of God and the covenant will be made; which must, in the same proportion, exhilarate their praise, and raise their wondrous notes upon higher, and still higher keys. So far from waxing old, or flattening, through the ceaseless performance of it, the song will not only be as if new, but will actually be always new, —entirely new and ravishing.

S E C T. IV.

This new song of praise to God will be performed with the mouth; "he hath put a new song (said "the Messiah) *in my mouth.*" The mouth, the lips, the tongue, and the throat, are, in scripture, considered as synonymous terms, pointing out the instrument or faculty of speech in man: and our Lord, as Man-Mediator, having taken to himself a true body, as well as a reasonable soul; must be considered—as like unto his brethren, in *that*, as well as in other bodily members and organs. His having and exercising the faculty of speech while on earth, will bear no dispute: and as the *same* body, which was humbled, is now exalted, who can doubt of his having and exercising the faculty of speech in heaven? When bodily members are ascribed unto God, it is only in condescension to our infirmity and weakness; but when ascribed even to God Redeemer, in his human nature, the ascription is just; there is no figure or allegory, no parable or mystery, no allusion or paradox, at all in it: and if the bodies of the saved ones will be made like unto Christ's glorious body, at last, it is plain that, amongst other particulars, they will have such faculty of speech, as shall render them capable of performing this new song of praise. This exalted piece of worship will, by the glorified Man and his glorious hosts, be performed with their hearts. On earth, there is often a vast difference between the language of mens hearts and mouths; in heaven, the former will dictate to the latter, and the latter be only an expression of the former. As our Lord in his human nature, never knew guile; so his members, when joined with him in this song, shall be incapable of guile. The human soul of Jesus Christ, with the souls of all redeemed sinners, will
be

be wholly engaged in the discharge of this new song ; all within them will be excited, enlarged, drawn out, wrapped up, and quite lost in it ; there will be no power of the mind unemployed, no faculty of the soul disengaged, no divided affection, no wandering thought, no interrupting occurrence, nor any distracting circumstance at all. The song will be as spiritual, the worship as refined, the praise as immaterial and sublime, as if the performance was confined to the soul, and to that alone. But,

They will perform this new song with their mouths, as well as hearts. In heaven, there can be no useless, unemployed member ; each will be adapted unto,—must be engaged in, the proper business for which they were made ; and praise being the most exalted exercise which, to the mouth, is competent ; it would be highly unreasonable to suppose, that any such faculty will, in heaven, come short of its greatest,—highest end. If on earth the mouth is sometimes suitably employed in the exercise of praise, when the worshippers labour under numberless disadvantages ; it is impossible to imagine, that, when rendered *more* perfect,—*most* gloriously capable of that exercise, they should be *less* engaged in it. The glorified ones in heaven, amongst whom doubtless the glorious Man Christ is comprehended, are positively represented, in the language of inspiration, as uttering, with their mouths, this new song of praise : “ I heard (says John) a “ great voice, of much people, in heaven, saying, “ Hallelujah, salvation, and glory, and honour, and “ power, unto the Lord our God. And, again, “ they said, Hallelujah, and, Amen, Hallelujah,” Rev. xix. 1, 3, 4. This is further evident, from a cessation of this worship, mentioned in scripture ; “ there was great silence in heaven (says the apostle) “ about the space of half an hour,” Rev. viii. 1.

But

But as there can be no cessation of worship, in an inward and spiritual view, where they serve God day and night, without wearying; this silence must have a respect to the external performance of it.

Further, this new song will, in heaven, be performed socially: closet devotion will then probably be no more; but the Head, with all his members, —joined, united, assembled, and employed together. Every circumstance that now renders public religion ensnaring and dangerous, will there be done away; every obligation to retirement and solitude, in the exercise of devotion, proportionally loosed; and all the fair company, the Redeemer and the redeemed, in a common church capacity, will, as with one mouth, utter this new, this delightful, song of praise.

In fine, this new song will be performed with harmony, elegance, symmetry and proportion, even as to the external part of it. There will be no jarring voice, no discordant note, no disagreeable sound, amongst the whole countless society; all shall be musical, beautiful and melodious. To this purpose, they are represented as performing this worship upon instruments of music; not that such instruments will be used, or needed, in heaven; but only to show with what unexceptionable propriety that inimitable concert shall be carried through: "I heard (says John) the voice of harpers, harping with their harps: and they sung, as it were, a new song before the throne; and no man could learn that song, but the hundred and forty four thousand (a definite for an indefinite number) which were redeemed from the earth," Rev. xiv. 2, 3. Never was time so kept, nor harmony so expressed, as by those immaculate, distinguished songsters above.

S E C T. V.

The Father puts this new song into the mouth of Christ. It is the operation of his hand, the work of his power, the display of his veracity, and the glorious proof and manifestation of all his perfections. He puts it not only into his mouth, in a personal, but in a mystical view; furnishing all the redeemed, as well as the Redeemer, with proper materials for praise; and he does so by gathering in the outcasts of Israel, and bringing home prodigal children,—by lost sons and daughters being found, and dead souls being made alive. If these delightful events, in the kingdom of grace, occasion joy and praise to angels; how much more must they be the occasion of it to the angel of the covenant, and to his ransomed tribes, of whom such converts make a part? The joy of a man child being born, the joy of a lost child being found, the joy of the bridegroom over the bride, the joy of harvest, or the joy felt in dividing of spoil; what is it, compared with the more substantial joy, whereof, to the *Man* Christ and his members, the conversion of sinners is the source and spring?

The Father likewise gives continual ground for this new song of praise, in the promotion, as well as production of grace; in building up elect sinners, as parts of the spiritual temple; and in rendering them more conform to the Lord Christ, their common Head and King. In the same proportion that the sinner's understanding is enlightened, his heart encouraged, his hands strengthened, his way, in the paths of holiness, confirmed, and his soul beautified with salvation; in the same proportion that sinners are helped, through grace, to be faithful to the Lord, to follow him thro' good and bad report, to adorn the doctrines of the gospel, to recommend religion

ligion to others, to mount up as on eagles wings, and to aspire after perfection; in that *very* proportion, does the Father afford matter for this new song of praise, to Christ and Christians. Nor is this the whole. For,

Jehovah the Father furnisheth the Redeemer, and the redeemed above, with proper materials for praise, in the dispensation of glory, as well as of grace; in bringing sinners to glory, as well as in fitting them for it. This is a circumstance vastly conducive toward the elevation of that new song. Never did the arrival of a dear friend, long absent, nor the consummation of a marriage, long wished for, yield the thousand or ten thousand part of that transport and delight, to the persons concerned; with which, on the translation of elect sinners to Emmanuel's land, the glorious *Man*, with his venerable family, will be animated and filled. And,

To conclude, the Father puts this new song into the mouth of Christ as Man Mediator, and into the mouths of all the redeemed, from among men; as he will, to eternity, continue them in such circumstances, of solid, rational, manly, growing, ceaseless pleasure and happiness, that they shall not be able to do otherways, than sing and give praise. It shall then be no less natural for them to utter this new song, than it was, while in the house of their pilgrimage, to "groan, being burdened."

S E C T, VI.

The exercise of praise is greatly recommended, from the example of the glorious *Man* Christ Jesus. Never did praying appear in such a beautiful and engaging light, as in his practice on earth; nor will praise ever appear so comely, and at the same time majestic, as from his pattern in heaven. It proves the exercise to be noble, great and divine;

could not be imagined, that he, in such exalted circumstances, would have been engaged and employed in it.

The object of this heavenly worship is no less a recommendation of it; not only God Creator, and God Preserver, but God our Saviour. If a sense of gratitude, duty and interest, is not totally eradicate, the importance, necessity and excellency of this exercise must at once appear: nor can any thing be more expressive of a criminal thoughtlessness, than to ly under such a variety of obligations without acknowledgments, suited in some measure to the vastness, freeness and extent of them. If what is great and remarkable, for value and beauty among the creatures, excite to strains of wonder and praise; how much more should such exercise have place, respecting him who is the sum, centre, and perfection of all possible, imaginable, everlasting loveliness, and excellency. But if praise and veneration are due to him, because of what he is in himself, abstracted from his love to sinners in Christ; when *that* surprising circumstance is taken into the account, it becomes like a threefold cord, that cannot be broken.

The duty and exercise of praise is still further recommended to us, from its being the peculiar business of all the redeemed above. The need of prayer, as to them, has ceased; and ceased, to return no more for ever; they have nothing to do but praise; nor will they ever act in a different capacity within the veil. Heaven continually rings with the ceaseless echo of their exalted joy; songs, in which, even angels cannot partake; and songs, which, to themselves, are peculiar,—absolutely peculiar, and undivided. Can we then be bound for Immanuel's shore, and yet not think of learning the language of that better country? Though encompassed with manifold grounds

grounds of sorrow and thanksgiving of God our Saviour, and repeating his words and works, we must have constant cause of praise: and therefore we should try the exercise, and repeat the endeavour; as knowing that he whom we praise, can make the tongue even of the stammerer to speak plain. Of this we should the rather make conscience, because the want of relish for such exercise is a glaring characteristic of wicked men; who, preferring vain, lewd and idle songs, to them of a spiritual nature, and, by being entertained with any composition, truly poetical and melodious, except what respects religion and eternity, plainly declare, they have no lot nor part in this matter; and have no present ground of hope, that they shall ever join in the new song of praise above.

You with whom the Lord has dealt graciously, whose hearts he has changed by his Spirit, and whom he has made willing in the day of his power; you see the delightful, honourable and ravishing employment reserved for you, when you get to glory. Have you, at particular times, got such a loosing of your bonds, such a reviving in your bondage, that ye could not do otherways than sing, yea, shout forth the praises of your God and Saviour? Do you remember the time when, and the place where, this was the case with you? do you remember the duty and ordinance, by means whereof you were thus enlarged towards the Lord? did you look upon such dispensations as Bethels, as the house of God, the gate of heaven, and the dawn of glory to you? were you then and there desirous of building tabernacles, and concluding that your mount stood strong? All this is absolutely nothing, to the joy, transport, and delight, in reserve for you. These earthen vessels could not bear the weight of joy, wherewith the exceeding great and eternal

eternal weight of glory, to be dispensed in heaven, is pregnant: nor could they, till cast of new, be capable of acting their part in performing the new song. Your highest attainments in the exercise of praise here, are pitiful and groveling, compared with what the lowest saint in all the ransomed assembly shall be capable of.

But, on the other hand, are you pained and perplexed, because such strangers to the exercise of praise? do you see and feel so many grounds of sorrow, shame and fear, that sighing, weeping, groaning, complaining, or, at most, praying, is all that you can win at? Is this so much the case, that you have little or no acquaintance with that comfort and satisfaction, which arise from the exercise of praise? and can you not, with any degree of comfortable application to yourselves, realize the satisfaction to be enjoyed from the performance of *this* new song of praise in heaven? well, your heaven will only be so much the sweeter, and your enjoyment of this song the more ravishing, when you get there. In proportion as these heavenly raptures are new, unexpected and unexperienced, they will prove the more delicious, entertaining and agreeable. Do you find, that, however elevated your minds, or however depressed, you cannot express yourselves in songs of praise? your very bodily frame is quite subversive of the external part of that exercise? your ear dull, your voice unmelodious, and your tongue stammering? when others sing in imitation of this new song, cannot you so much as join, without spoiling the concert, and breaking the harmony? for the sake of others, are you often either *silent*, while they *sing*; or must you only *whisper*, while they *shout forth* the praises of God and the Lamb? The day, my brethren, fast hastens, when this, with your other complaints, shall be done away; when your
 voices

voices shall be as tuneable, your tongues as melodious, and your ears as delicate, as any of the songsters in Immanuel's happy land : in this, as in every other respect, your bodies shall be fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body. Do you find such unhappy intervals, from constitutional defects, unavoidable occurrences, or immediate temptations, that, instead of singing the new song of Moses, fretfulness and distraction worm out your peace, prey upon the vitals of your joy, make you burdens to yourselves, render you disagreeable to others, and not only mar and impede, but almost quite overturn, your views of joining the Mediator, with his company, in the blissful work ? That such dusky and gloomy shades may, in hallowed characters, sometimes have place, will not be denied ; and that such circumstances are grounds of deep humiliation, must be admitted : but, as Christians, your comfort lies in this, that, when got within the veil, you will be raised above the possibility of interruption, in the praises of God ; from whatever cause, for whatever continuance, to whatever degree.

Be therefore, upon the whole, exhorted, to realize the happy period, when these former things shall have passed away : mean time, to be acting as those who are animated with such great and enlarged hopes. That you are, before the throne, to follow the glorious *Man*, in the new song of praise, should considerably heighten your value of that state, your ambition after that exercise, and your desire to mingle with that blessed society. Study such cheerfulness in the ways of God, as will tend to wipe off the common, but groundless reproach from the gospel, as if it was dull and insipid in itself, and rendered its votaries gloomy and morose. None, sure none, have such *foundation of joy, none such cause to sing, as you,*

candidates for everlasting bliss. Say not, in whatever circumstances, You have no ground of singing : for, as long as you are out of hell, you ought to praise ; and, praising God for this, your noise may insensibly rise to a wonderful imitation of the new song itself.

You, on the other hand, who are still in a natural state, unacquainted with the power of converting and renewing grace, strangers to the influence of Christ's resurrection on your hearts, and of the doctrines of the gospel upon your lives ; who know nothing of a bondage state, nor of that glorious liberty wherewith Christ makes his people free ; you, in this doctrine, see glorious privileges and employments in which you have no part, for which you have no capacity. As far as your present state can forebode, all your singing and gladness will be circumscribed by this life, and confined, absolute and confined, to it : continuing and dying unconverted, you shall never join in the new song, nor so much as see the new Jerusalem ; within the gates of that city, no such unclean things can enter. If you never, in any degree, enter into the spirit of praise here, is it to be imagined, can it, without impropriety, be alledged, that you are on the way to that land where praise is the chief employment, and worship all the business of the blest inhabitants ? If you will not so much as join externally in the praises of God, but be dumb, while all around you join in the song ; can it be thought you have any lot in this matter ? So far is the contrary the truth, that whatever your employment thro' eternity, praise shall make no part of it. If you look on public praise with such indifference, as, without necessity, to absent from ordinances until that part of the service is over ; and to retire again before praise are offered up ; do not you discover the

the want of taste for the work of heaven; and consequently, the want of interest in that better world? In that unhappy state, though you could secure a pass through the gates into the city, heaven and glory would afford no more happiness to you, than palaces to swine, whose groveling element is the mire. But you are not in the way to heaven, you are by no means candidates for glory. Others may, numbers will, be promoted to the work of praise, in the higher house with the ransomed tribes; but you, dying in your irregnecy, shall be debarred, excommunicate, and expelled, as reprobate souls. You will, indeed, see the glorious *Man* with his company, but shall not mingle with them; you will see the pearly port of Emmanuel's land, but shall not set foot upon it? you will see the crowns of the redeemed, but shall not wear any of them; you will see the Father put this new song in *their* mouths, but shall not enjoy the least smile of his countenance. Think then, O think, how galling and tormenting such circumstances must prove, how painful and distressing such sights. Though no *positive* punishment was in reserve, would you not, in such things, feel the pains of hell, and groan under the weight of damnation? The design, however, of scripture, in such representations, is not to introduce despair, or torment before the time; but only to give the alarm, in order to your recovery ere it be too late; for there is hope in Israel concerning this thing; it is at least possible, that this new song may be put into your mouths. Though these mouths, made for praise, have been employed as instruments of unrighteousness, in cursing, swearing, lying, foolish talking, and sinful jesting; employed in defamation, calumny and reproach, and in every thing below the man,—unworthy the Christian; yet God

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is willing to be reconciled, to put you among the children, to hold fellowship with you, to fill your mouths with songs of salvation, to give you grace and glory, and, in every respect, to do you all saving good, in the way of his appointment, through Jesus Christ, to the praise of his grace. Seek him in that channel, implore him for that purpose, and wait upon him, by the means, duties and ordinances of his own institution, as you would wish not to be cast off;—and hope he will not put you to shame.

C H A P. II.

Of the Redeemer's triumph over the hearts of sinners upon earth. "Many shall see it, and shall fear; and shall trust in the Lord."

S E C T. I.

THE subjects of this promise are *men* in general, not angels, nor devils. Angels have nothing in their circumstances, known to us, that renders such promises needful; and the state of devils puts them absolutely beyond the reach of the promise, and renders them incapable of interest in any word of grace. Besides, as this promise has a particular relation to Jesus Christ, those, of whose nature he partook, can only be considered as the subjects of it. Though, in the application of the blessings promised, it is more restricted: yet, in the revelation and exhibition of the promise itself, the warrant to believe is so unreserved, that mankind sinners in general, may, and should consider themselves as interested in it: "The promise (saith the apostle, to a promiscuous multitude) is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off;

" off; even to as many as the Lord our God shall call," Acts ii. 39. It is impossible to imagine, how a person's putting away the promises from himself, as what he has no right to intermeddle with, can be reconciled with his suitably attending to that remarkable declaration of grace.

But the subjects of this promise are *elect* men in particular. The opposition of carnal minds to the doctrine of election is such, that at present one labours under considerable disadvantage, to insinuate any thing in favour of it. But as it is a scriptural doctrine, a part of the council of heaven, an article of the Christian faith; though counted fools for espousing, we should never be ashamed of it. Did not David speak of elect men, when he said, "Blessed is the man whom thou *chosest* and "causest to approach unto thee?" Psal. lxxv. 4. did not Malachi speak of elect men, when by him the Lord said, "Yet I *loved* Jacob, and "hated Esau?" Mal. i. 2, 3. did not Paul to the Romans speak of elect men, when he said, "Whom God did *foreknow*, he also did *predestinate*?" Rom. viii. 29. to the Corinthians did he not speak of them, when he said, "God hath *chosen* the foolish things of the world; God hath *chosen* the weak things of the world, the "base things of the world; and things that are "despised hath God *chosen*; yea, and the things "that are not?" 1 Cor. i. 28. and did he not to the Ephesians likewise speak of elect men, when he said, "Being *predestinated* according to the *purpose* of him who worketh all things after the "council of his own will?" Eph. i. 11. But why speak of David, the prophets or apostles? benoni, a greater than either, a greater than all, bears testimony to this doctrine: our Lord himself spake of elect men, when he said, "All that the Father

"giveth me, shall come to me," John vi. 37. And again, "I pray for *them*; I pray not for the world, "but for them which thou hast *given* me," John xvii. 5. Upon these and such like grounds, the doctrine of election may be considered as scriptural: and, on that supposition, elect sinners are, in particular, the subjects of this promise; as it is not only exhibit, warranting them, in common with their fellow sinners, to believe and improve it for the ends of infinite wisdom and grace; but, as they shall eventually be brought under the influence of the promise, be made partakers of promised grace, and inherit the promised salvation. It is for *their* sakes, and *theirs* alone, that ever the promise was exhibited; it is owing to *them*, that ever sinners, in general, were blest with the common tender of mercy; and as soon as *they* are brought in, as soon as the end of the promise, as to *them*, is reached, other sinners will, at once, but for ever, be deprived of that exalted privilege. Other sinners *may* take hold of the promise; nothing in the external dispensation of the gospel hinders their doing so: but elect sinners *shall* take hold of the promise; rather, the grace of the promise *shall* take hold of them.

S E C T. II.

One blessing here promised is, "They shall see it." If we consider this part of the promise, as it is rendered in the passage under view, the particle *it* must have a respect to what went before; and the meaning will be, that sinners shall see what the Father hath done to Christ as Man-Mediator, in "inclining to him and hearing his cry; bringing him up out of the horrible pit and miry clay; setting his feet upon a rock, establishing his go-
" ings,

"ings, and putting a new song in his mouth;" that the eyes of their understandings shall be enlightened for that purpose: in other words, that the grace of faith, respecting Christ, as once dead, now alive, once humbled, now exalted, shall be produced, and promoted in them, exercised and practised by them. But the particle *it*, being only a supplement, the phrase literally is, "They shall see;" which is peculiarly pithy, emphatical and comprehensive. It says, in the strongest terms, that, in a spiritual view, sinners are, by nature blind; and that, until put under the influence of this promise, they see not. Whence, in the language of inspiration, the unconverted state is frequently represented as a state of darkness; "For ye were (says the apostle, to the believers at Ephesus) sometimes darkness," Eph. v. 8. "not only in the dark, but darkness itself. Whatever men know, however bright their talents, pregnant their genius, accurate their observations, curious their disquisitions, extensive their reading, and universal their learning; as long as they are unconverted, they are considered, in the eye of the holy Ghost, as not seeing, and, in that state, incapable of it. But,

This part of the promise respects a positive change to be produced in the sinners understanding, the leading, and most noble power of the mind; the avenue through which all spiritual light, saving discoveries, distinguishing knowledge, enter; evident from the repeated testimony of inspiration: "The commandment of the Lord is pure (says the Psalmist) *enlightening* the eyes," Psal. xix. 8. "speaking of the Gentiles, our Lord said unto the apostle, "I send thee now, to *open* their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light," Acts xxvi.

13. And, as a necessary prerequisite to men's

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having saving uptakings of the gospel, Paul mentions "the eyes of their understanding being *enlightened*," Eph. i. 18. Whether as to the law or the gospel, this promise, illustrated by such other scriptures, seems to insinuate, that faith is properly and immediately seated in the understanding.

In the enjoyment of this promise, the eyes of sinners shall be opened as to themselves: they shall see their natural and practical guilt, their original and actual sin, their total depravity, universal corruption, and absolute disconformity to the image of God: they shall see the true demerit of their characters, as guilty sinners; rendering them obnoxious to the divine displeasure, exposing them, soul and body, for time and eternity, to the wrath of God: they shall see, not only that they are unworthy of any favour, but that they justly deserve every frown: shall see, that they cannot deliver or rescue their own souls, cannot better their covenant state, cannot appease the divine wrath, nor acquire and procure the divine absolution; and see, that they are spiritually, as well as legally dead; and that, as they have destroyed, so, they can do nothing but destroy themselves. This much seems implied in what Paul saw of himself, after the grace of this promise took hold of his heart; "When the commandment came, sin revived and I died," Rom. vii. 9.

Under the influence of this promise, their eyes shall likewise be opened, with respect unto God. They shall see God as *absolute*, and shall see him as *gracious*: as *absolute*, sinners shall see him, in the demands, penalty, threatenings and curses of the law; see him as angry with them, speaking words of terror to them, pouring wrath upon them, and pointing the sword of justice against them; because of *their* breach of *his* law, and disconformity to it, in
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heart and life: they shall see him to be of such infinite perfection, excellence,—moral excellence, and glory, that he cannot but be angry with sinners, as such; and angry with them every day; nor do otherways than act as a consuming fire to the workers of iniquity.

Was this the whole, their seeing God could only wound, distress, distract, and drive them to hopelessness and despair: for none, in this sense, can see God, and live. But the promise carries in it, their seeing him also as *gracious*. Accordingly, under the influence of it, sinners shall see God as reconciling the world unto himself, in Jesus Christ, not imputing to them their trespasses; as not only merciful, but just, in justifying even the ungodly who believe; as accessible by sinners, the chief not excepted; and placable toward them in the way of his appointment by the gospel: they shall see him, as calling, warranting, encouraging, commanding them, whatever they have been, done, deserved, to return to him; as revealing, exhibiting and offering peace and pardon, life and salvation, grace and glory, to the hearers of the gospel; and declaring his willingness they should be saved, his unwillingness they should perish: they shall see him as particularly exalted in the dispensation of eternal life to sinners, and wonderfully glorified in their enjoyment of it: they shall see him, as using every argument for prevailing with men to believe, and to make their calling and election sure: and, to crown all, they shall see him as exhibiting his free, gracious, absolute promise, “to work in them the whole good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power,” 2 Theff. i. 11.

S E C T. III.

Another blessing here promised, is, "They shall fear." As the blessing represented in the preceding section respects the sinner's understanding, so this has a regard to his affections, the proper seat of fear. Under the influence of this promise, sinners shall be made anxious and thoughtful about salvation; shall dread the consequence of abiding in their natural state; shall be apprehensive of perishing under the load of divine wrath; shall become restless, as long as they are far from God, and his righteousness; shall not be easy at a distance from Jesus Christ, the only ordinance of heaven for saving sinners; shall forebode a peculiar degree of misery, in the event of dying in their sins, after all the means, toward their recovery, they have enjoyed; shall despair of help from themselves, or other creatures; and may labour under some degree of uncertainty, that ever the Lord will interpose in their behalf, or come for their salvation. According to the degrees of this legal fear, they shall read of no threatening, in the whole book of God, and shall hear of no terror, in the application of scripture doctrine, without considering the whole as addressed to them. It is in this way that the arrows of the Almighty drink up their spirits; that the terrors of the Lord make them afraid; that they feel the sentence of death in themselves; that their consciences are wounded, their peace broken, their false hopes overturned, the foundations of their former rest entirely sapped, and all their wounds made to wear an incurable aspect. Thus far sinners may fear, thus far numbers have feared, without going farther, without being saved.

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But, where the Lord has gracious designs upon the soul, he leaves them not in this lurch,—forsakes them not in this labyrinth; but makes an evangelical and saving exercise to follow *this* of a common and legal kind; and makes *that* law-work conducive toward their future experience of gospel grace. Wherefore, under the influence of this promise, they shall be made to fear in a *filial*, as well as in a *legal* manner; they shall be put among the children of God, as a necessary pre-requisite to their having, and exercising the temper of children; shall, in consequence of their union to Jesus Christ, have interest in God as their Father, and in all the privileges and blessings—arising from that relation, connected with it, and inseparable from it. They shall belong to his family, not only as creatures, but as renewed and redeemed creatures; not only, as he is the great Parent of mankind, but as he is a God of grace, and Father in Christ. This endearing relation, as to their enjoyment of the fruits and effects of it, commences at conversion, and continues to eternity: “Ye are all the children of God (says the apostle to the Galatians) by faith in Christ Jesus,” Gal. iii. 26 and, to the Romans, he speaks “of the glorious liberty of the children of God,” Rom viii. 21. Besides *this* translation into the family of God by conversion, they shall, under the influence of this promise, be animated with the Spirit,—the living Spirit of Jesus Christ, as equally necessary toward the suitable exercise of this holy fear. For, when the Lord promises the effect, it implies his promising likewise the cause from whence such effect can only flow: “And because ye are sons (says the apostle, to the believers at Galatia) God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your heart,” Gal. iv.

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6. Moreover, under the influence of this promise, they shall have a holy and conscientious respect to the authority and law of God: "Then shall I not be ashamed (says the psalmist) when I have a respect unto all thy commandments," Psal. cxix. 6. They shall, from a principle of love to God, be tender of offending him, at any time, in any way, to any degree. They shall be as cautious of incurring fatherly displeasure, or subjecting themselves to the discipline of the new covenant, as, under the influence of legal fear, they were of falling under the divine wrath, and bearing the penalty of the covenant of works: they shall entertain a holy jealousy and suspicion of themselves; and, convinced of the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of their own hearts, study a habitual watchfulness against backsliding from the Lord, in heart or way: they shall thence be particularly concerned, that the Lord would "hold up their goings in his paths, that their footsteps slip not," Psal. xvii. 5. Thus, by Solomon, the holy Ghost represents the man as "happy, that feareth alway," Prov. xxviii. 14. and the man as wretched, who is a stranger to that fear; "For he that trusteth to his own heart, is a fool," Prov. xxviii. 26.

S E C T. IV.

The last blessing mentioned in this promise is, that they "shall trust in the Lord."—Upon gospel principles, the object of the sinner's trust must be a God in Christ; a God revealing himself to men, in the person of Christ, "who is the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person," Heb. i. 3. in so much, that "he who hath seen the Son, hath seen the Father." John xiv. 9.—

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It must be a God revealing himself in the doctrine of Christ, which shews the divine perfections, and the harmony of them, in the salvation of sinners ;—revealing himself in the obedience of Christ, as in which the divine law, however holy, however extensive, was magnified and made honourable ;—and in the death of Christ, as what Justice required, and with which Justice was satisfied. The object of their trust, is a God well pleased with sinners through Jesus Christ ; pleased with their persons, as represented by him ; and pleased with their performances, as flowing from vital union with him, and influence derived from him ; and a God, glorified in the salvation of sinners, through the mediation of Christ ; a God, providing, allowing, dispensing, commanding their salvation in that channel, and doing so, without the least dishonour to any of his perfections, Justice and Truth themselves not excepted. David calls pardoned sinners, to “ give thanks at the remembrance of God’s holiness ;” Psal. xxx. 4.—and the apostle speaks of God’s being “ just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus,” Rom. iii. 26. None doubts, that mercy and goodness shine in the dispensation of grace and glory to sinners ; but, as the object of their trust, the, seemingly jarring, attributes of the Divine Nature, are all reconciled and celebrated in the same dispensation.—The righteousness of Jesus Christ, called in scripture the righteousness of God, is particularly comprehended in this object of trust ; our Lord’s righteousness, being the price of redemption, the condition of salvation, is to be leaned unto, by all who need such blessings, and have no personal righteousness, by which to procure them : “ This is the name wherewith he shall be called, “ The Lord our righteousness,” Jer. xxiii. 6. And (says the apostle, speaking of Jesus Christ) “ Who

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"Who, of God, is made unto us, righteousness,"
1 Cor. i. 30.

In fine, the word of promise, emitted by the Father, yea and amen in Christ, recorded in the gospel, and exhibited there, for the obedience of faith, is, in a peculiar manner, the object of this trust. Whatever God has promised, to his anointed, respecting sinners,—whether as to blessings, common or peculiar, temporal, spiritual, or eternal; every such word of grace and promise is a bottom of trust, to be improved, looked to, leaned on, acquiesced in, by them. The psalmist spoke with a distinguishing relish, of "the word upon which" "God had caused him to hope," Psal. cxix. 49. and, by such improvement of the word, men trust in the Lord, whose veracity and other perfections are engaged for the accomplishment of it.

The matter of this trust is manifold,—equal in breadth and length to the new covenant, and the promises of it; it comprehends every thing, wrapped up, conveyed, and secured there; every thing, respecting the being, well-being, and perfection of the life of grace in the soul; every thing needed here, every thing to be enjoyed hereafter. Branching out into particulars, would oblige us to condescend on converting, renewing, pardoning, comforting, establishing, and sealing grace; on furniture for work and warfare; on spiritual wisdom, gracious ability, divine protection, perseverance in the ways of holiness, together with the end of men's faith, the salvation of their souls. In short, all the blessings, benefits, riches, righteousness and redemption, provided for in the covenant, purchased by the Saviour, secured by the promise, exhibited by the gospel, and enjoyed by the saved ones, in soul and body, in time and eternity, belong to
the

the matter of this trust, and are comprehended in it.

The exercise of this trust is peculiar to the soul, as having its seat there : and carries in it their believing the truth of these discoveries, respecting Christ, and respecting the promise, which is called by our Lord, a " setting to the seal, that God is true." John iii. 3. It carries in it their approbation of the things discovered, as excellent in themselves, suitable to sinners, and glorious in their effects ; as these were all *David's* salvation, so they are " all *their* desire." It carries in it, their acceptance of these blessings ; their receiving, applying, and, in way of humble endeavour, through grace, making the whole their own, by believing, as Jehovah Redeemer does, by revelation and exhibition : " Be it, or it shall be, unto me, according to " thy word," Luke i. 38. is the language of that divine exercise. It carries in it, their dependence on the Lord, as the object of their trust, for his bestowing the exceeding great and precious blessings, which are the matter of it : their being so persuaded of his truth, justice, power, and other attributes, that they cannot imagine, how the smallest jot or tittle can fail ; and so persuaded of the Lord's security, being legal, good and valid, that they look on the blessings promised as theirs ; and actually enter on duties and trials, in the faith the promise shall be accomplished, and the blessing bestowed : at least, in proportion to the measure and degrees of such trust, this will be the case. But, as this exercise is seated in the soul, so it influences the conduct ; it leads to the performance of new and holy obedience, in all its parts ; as to heart and life, principle and practice, word and action.

S E C T. V.

The security that sinners shall thus *see* and *fear* and *trust*, lies in the Messiah having said so. They *shall see*, &c. (says he) in the passage under view. Though these exercises are incumbent upon sinners, in way of duty; yet, as long as they are unconverted, they are incapable of them; and therefore scriptural calls to the performance of these duties, are, in such unhappy circumstances, *killing letters*, full of demands, the sinner cannot answer, and big with consequences he cannot bear. But, to the ceaseless praise of matchless grace, the exercises represented in the foregoing sections, are, in numberless other scriptures, considered rather as *privileges* than *duties*; and, therefore, our Lord's words may be considered as a promise of putting sinners in possession of them.—Jehovah-Redeemer, foreseeing the wretched circumstances of forlorn men, and being well pleased for his own righteousness sake, interposed, and interposes, in way of promise, that sinners, at least the elect part of them, should comply with his will of grace, in the particulars condescended upon. He interposed, and interposes, in such a manner, that regard to his own perfections, and zeal for his own glory, absolutely secures the accomplishment of the promise, in the experience of sinners. There are other promises, wherein peace and pardon, life and salvation, are secured; but, in this, and such like words of grace, the very influence needed toward their discovery and improvement of these blessings, is treasured up, and pointed out; warranting them to expect, that the Lord will actually *cause* them *see* and *fear* and *trust*.

Promises, in general, are made immediately by the Father, to his anointed; and, thence, according to

to the apostle, "yea and amen in Christ;" 2 Cor. i. 20.—whereas this promise is uttered by the Messiah himself; in which, he either acts as God, and ascertains his oneness with, and equality to the Father and Spirit, in making and performing the promises of the covenant; or else he expresses his intire, unshaken, confidence in the Father's veracity, plighted to him, by the covenant, for the ends of his people's salvation; and does so as a pattern and encouragement for sinners to aim at the same reliance on the Promiser, as if they were equally able to believe; and, as sensible of their own weakness and wickedness, to look to the promise for the grace of faith itself.

S E C T. VI.

The promise under consideration is, as to the subjects of it, vastly extensive; for it is not one, or a few, but *many*, who shall be put under the influence of it, and enjoy the blessings wrapped up in it. In this indefinite way, the great number of the saved ones is emphatically pointed out; and though they are few compared with the rest of mankind, they are, in scripture, represented as numerous in themselves. Not to speak of Enoch's prophecy, saying, "Behold, the Lord cometh, with ten thousands of his saints," Jude 14. nor of John's vision, who saw "one hundred and forty four thousand sealed," Rev. vii. 4. we are informed, by the same divine authority, that the sinners, who have been, now are, or shall afterwards be put under the influence of this promise, are absolutely countless and innumerable; "I beheld (says the apostle) and lo a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before"

"fore the throne, and before the Lamb," Rev. vii. 9. And, "in my Father's house (said our "Lord) are *many mansions*;" and, as no heir shall want a mansion, so, no mansion, in Christ's Father's house, shall want an heir, when the mystery of God is finished.

S E C T. VII.

What a distinguishing mercy is it to us, that there is such a thing as a promise! that ever Jehovah condescended to speak words of grace to sinners! He might have supported the glory of his whole character, though sinners had never heard any thing from the mouth of God, but words of terror and wrath. That, therefore, mount Sinai is changed into mount Zion, is a mercy, whereof we can never have too high thoughts; a mercy we can never enough admire, and for which we can never enough adore.

How suitable this promise to our circumstances, as sinners! The very grace we need is provided, laid up, and secured there; and that grace is exhibit in such manner,—to such degree, that all our needs may be supplied, all our plagues cured, and all our treasures filled. If we are straitned, it is not in God, but in ourselves. The true eye-salve, the living balm, the mollifying ointment, are stored up here; and if sinners eyes are not opened, their hearts not quickened, nor their diseases healed,—it is owing to a criminal neglect of this grace of God; by no means, to any defect in the promise itself.

When men are acquainted with the influence of this promise, in the respects mentioned, their state is doubtless gracious, and their frame evangelical. And, though labouring under such uncertainty as keeps

keeps you from concluding in the affirmative, yet, if you see your need of promised grace, in order to your being exercised in the manner represented; see there is nothing in yourselves that can be effectually conducive toward your *seeing, fearing and trusting*; see, that if the Lord, in a way of mercy, work it not in you, you must continue blind, dead, and unbelieving; that means and ordinances are ineffectual in themselves; and that, unless the Promiser, by the grace of the promise, apprehend you, you can have no hope:—if you are well pleased with the device of infinite wisdom and love; and pleased particularly, that God work all your works in you, and for you, and bear the glory of the whole, in time and through eternity: if this plan appears with such beauty and lustre in your eye, that it, not only breeds admiration, commands your attention, and captivates your affections, but, makes you, with cheerfulness, desire to be laid under obligations, and become everlasting debtors to grace, for all your salvation: if you find, that such views of the divine promises are so far from slackening your diligence, that they make you more anxiously concerned, to study the performance of duty,—persuaded, that grace does not abound, to encourage your continuance in sin: if such views of the promise have more influence on your practice, than all the arguments arising from the danger and condemnation of a natural state: if you are suspicious of yourselves, lest, after having a promise of entering into God's rest, you should come short of it; and if you are deeply concerned, that the Lord would keep you from deceiving yourselves, and lying down in sorrow: if these things are so, it looks as if you were heirs of promise; and there is, thence, reason to hope, that, following on to know the Lord,

Lord, you shall find his goings forth for your salvation prepared as the morning.

Those, on the other hand, who are strangers to the exercises mentioned, have no present, no scriptural pretensions to true religion. If ye were never sensible of spiritual blindness and deadness; never saw your need of this promise, with the grace contained in it; never prized these blessings for their own worth, as well as their suitability to you, in your present situation; if you were never concerned to seek them in the way, and by the means of the Lord's appointment; never found a willingness, through grace, to lie under obligations to him, for accomplishing his words of grace in your experience; never felt so much of your natural darkness, as to recommend gospel-light; so much legal fear, as to recommend gospel-liberty; nor so much of an evil heart of unbelief, as to recommend the precious faith of God's elect: and, if you were never dissatisfied with yourselves, for the want of these things; then, without all peradventure, your hearts are unrenewed, your frames disevangical, your state perishing, and your danger peculiar: however easy, you have no spiritual ground for it; whatever peace you enjoy, it is not the peace of God, that passeth all understanding; and your hopes for eternity are all spurious and delusive. If others may have many hopeful and promising-like symptoms, while at bottom they are naught, in a saving view; your pretensions, in the want of these things, to saving acquaintance with the gospel, must be still more unwarrantable and vain. Though nothing can excuse your former neglect of so great a salvation; or justify your conduct in deceiving yourselves; yet the case admits of a cure, the danger of reprieve, and your state
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of a blessed and saving change. This promise would lose much of its beauty and emphasis, if that was not the case; for it respects sinners in general, and you, of consequence, among the rest.

Let, therefore, the love and grace of God, in the exhibition of such words of grace, have a constraining influence upon you, especially, since it is certain, that slighted mercy, provoked goodness, and despised patience, will, in the end, break out, into the more inexorable wrath. Behold, sinners, Jehovah-Redeemer, in the gospel, brings, offers, and exhibits his salvation to you. The sheet of covenant blessings is thereby let down from heaven; and you are called to arise, take and eat. But, continuing to despise the vision, the sheet will be taken up, to be let down no more; one or another call, will be our Lord's farewell knock at the door of your hearts: in which event, we would not bear your reproof, at the bar of Jesus Christ, for thousands, nay, for myriads of worlds. Up, then, shake off these guilty, those unhallowed slumbers; hearken, regard, obey, the heavenly call. Awake, awake, there is no time, no room, no reason for delay; the present moment flies from you, and the next may introduce the seal of your condemnation. Your duty, interest and safety, jointly urge you believing the promise, that God the Saviour will make you see, cause you fear, and enable you trust in the Lord.

You should aim at believing it, because it is addressed for that very purpose; because it is the only way in which you can put honour upon God, after all the dishonour you have done him; because it is not left, as what you may, or may not do; For this is God's commandment, (as well as his

“ promise

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" promise) that we should believe on the Name of
" his Son Jesus Christ ;" 1 John iii. 23. because
the Lord, in the free tender of mercy, declares
his willingness to fulfil the promise, in your expe-
rience ; because all other methods for acquiring
the exercises represented, than by virtue of the
free promise, will be vain ; and, because your not
believing will issue in your ruin, and leave your
blood upon your own heads.

T H E

T H E
C H R I S T I A N ' s D U T Y
T O W A R D
K I N G S,
A N D
T H O S E I N A U T H O R I T Y.

S E R M O N I.

I T I M. ii. 1, 2.

I exhort therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men ; For kings and all that are in authority ; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty.

TH E accession of GEORGE III. to the British throne, is the reason why we have pitched on these words, as a proper subject of your present attention. The relation between kings and subjects being mutual, the duties of that relation must be no less so. Those incumbent on the sovereign, will possibly be recommended by such public teachers as are more immediately intrusted with the care of his soul. These binding upon the subjects, should,

by their respective pastors, be no less represented and enforced. As, therefore, your instruction becomes more immediately our province, it is hoped we will be forgiven, in the present Essay, through grace, to point out the new duties, which, to us, arise from this new relation. Nor, in doing so, can the servants of Christ be said to slide from their proper sphere, since the apostle of the Gentiles, in this letter to an eminent minister of the gospel, gave it so particularly in charge. And if it was the duty of pastors so to teach, and of Christians to practise, when kings and those in authority were mostly Heathens, what a forcible argument to it must necessarily arise from the important consideration of our king, and those now in authority, being, by profession at least, Christians.

Though the letter is address'd to Timothy alone you'll easily see, that the duties in our text were not recommended as incumbent exclusively on him; but as equally and indispensably binding upon all to whom the knowledge of this Epistle should come. Without any critical remark upon the words at all, this conclusion might be justly formed; but it will appear with greater evidence, if it be observed, that the *hyper pantoan* may be rendered *of all men*, as well as *for them*. In that point of light, the universal obligation of those duties will bear no dispute, Paul being, thereby, represented as exhorting all men, to make supplication, prayer-intercessions, and giving of thanks, for kings, and for all that are in authority.

Besides, if the benefits arising from a well constituted government, are diffused through all the different orders of men, it must follow, by a most natural consequence, that the proper returns of duty, should, from all quarters, terminate in such governors.

If this appears to be the case, from the light of nature itself, can the consequence, with any tolerable grace, be denied,—when the authority of a divine revelation is put into the scale? There, as a duty to the Prince of the kings of the earth, Christians are enjoined to comply with the design of this text.

The nature and importance of the duties under view, are vastly mistaken, if men consider them as appendages only to the Christian practice, what may be neglected with impunity, or slightly discharged with approbation; for our inspired author, in his exhortation to Timothy, sets them on the very front, makes them lead the van, and, by calling for the performance of them *first of all*, insinuates, that, in the estimate of heaven, they are duties of the highest consequence, and cannot be neglected, nor performed with indifference, but at the peril,—the highest peril, of the unhapy delinquent.

The different terms used, by our apostle, in expressing this comprehensive duty, serve to show—the great extent, as well as necessity of it.

Supplications may imply the deprecation of evil,—penal, moral, and natural. Deprecating penal evils respects deliverance from the guilt of sin, and from all the wrath incurred by it, due to it, and consequent upon it, whether as to soul or body, as to time or eternity. Moral evil consists in the disconformity of the heart and practice to the image and law of God, in the pollution and dominion of sin, in what renders men unlike God, unmeet for enjoying, incapable of serving him; and deprecation, in that view, has the removal of that evil as its proper subject. Natural evil, again, which may only be deprecated, in as far, as to infinite wisdom and goodness seems best, takes in all the afflictions and disasters of life, all that is paining to the body, all that is perplexing to the mind, all that is distressing

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in a personal or relational regard, and, in one word, it takes in adversity in its whole breadth and length, under whatever colour, of whatever kind, to whatever degree, for whatever duration, and with whatever circumstances, common or peculiar, known or unknown, it may be attended.

Prayers may imply the more direct exercise of, imploring or petitioning;—which is so extensive, according to their circumstances whom it respects, that we cannot possibly condescend on all the particulars of it.—All special and spiritual blessings; all purchased and promised good; all common and distinguishing favour; all outward and inward prosperity; all personal, stational, and relational mercies; grace here, glory hereafter, and every good thing;—all these are comprehended in the subject of prayer.—Without excluding those for temporal benefits, petitions for benefits of a saving kind, seem, from the following context, to have been more especially in the apostle's eye; where we are told, as an argument for enforcing this exhortation, that God “will have all men,” *i. e.* men of all sorts, kings, and those in authority not excepted, “to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth,” *vers.* 4. If we take up the matter in this point of light, then, prayer is to be made, more particularly, for converting, renewing, persevering grace; for light and life; love and liberty; peace and pardon; access and acceptance; spiritual riches and righteousness; furniture for work and warfare; strength and comfort; sealing and establishing influences; with whatever else may be wrapped up in the bosom of the gospel-salvation, as enjoyed or expected by the heirs of promise.

Intercessions may be applied, with equal justice, to deprecation or petition, that term signifying properly the interposition of one person for another.

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According to this view, Christians are called to make the interest of others their own, to interest themselves in it, to exercise a generous concern about it, and to deprecate evil, or implore good, with the sincerity and earnestness the particular case does, or may, require. This view of the term is justified from the expletive argument used by Paul, to recommend the duty; "for, (says he) there is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus," verſ. 5. and, therefore, would he have ſaid, it is indifpenſibly binding upon all Chriſtians, to make interceſſion for kings, and for all that are in authority.

Giving of thanks, as it ſtands in this paſſage, ſays, that Chriſtians are not only to bear the burdens of others, but to feel with them in their joy and happineſs, and to feel in ſuch a manner and meaſure, as proper ſentiments and expreſſions of holy gratitude ſhall have place. There is, perhaps, ſomething more noble, ſublime, and diſintereſted, in giving thanks for others when in proſperous circumſtances, than in exerciſing a concern about them when in adverſity. Adverſity is ſome how naturally productive of pain, wherever it is obſerved; from what Principle in the irregenerate we will not now ſay; whereas proſperity, diſcovered in the lot of others, frequently in all, always in moſt, begets envy and diſcontent: but the Chriſtian virtue here recommended, will, according to the vigour and exerciſe of it, be expreſſed in grateful returns to God, for what excellencies, natural, gracious, or acquired, have place in others, for what happineſs is beſtowed upon them, for what good is done by them, for what advantages they enjoy, for what uſefulneſs they are capable of, and for every thing, that, to ſuch perſons themſelves, is a proper ground of thankſ-giving and praiſe.

These duties are not merely to be thought of, in their propriety, value, and excellence; nor only to be set about, in way of purpose or promise; but, if the apostle's words have any meaning at all, they are to be actually performed,—performed instantly, resolutely, and constantly: for the exhortation bears, that “supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made.” As Paul was directing Timothy how to act in the discharge of his ministry, it will scarce be disputed, that public worship is particularly intended. The obligation upon every Christian, in his personal capacity, to make conscience of these generous duties, by no means supercedes the necessity of Christians their performing them, as families, societies, or churches.—So far from superceding that necessity, it insinuates, proves, and highly corroborates the important truth.

The apostle was no less in earnest himself, than he would have Christians to be in this matter: he did not express the obligation of these duties with the coolness of a philosopher; but with all the warmth, the pathos and address of the saint, as well as the dignity and main of a public teacher. “I exhort therefore,” said he. In the preceding chapter he had touched on his favourite theme—the exceeding riches of grace toward his own soul—declared the distinguishing efficacy the death of Christ might have on the chief of sinners; and delivered a solemn charge to Timothy, enforced by the apostasy of Hymeneus and Alexander from the faith; and, to these interesting facts he refers, now as a poignant argument, by the particle *therefore*. Seeing in me, would he have said, there is an example of a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an injurious person, obtaining mercy; seeing the death of Christ lays a foundation of hope, respecting sinners, the chief of them not excepted; you need not d

spair of succeeding in behalf of others, whatever their characters, their circumstances or provocations: nor must you fail in the discharge of these duties, as you would not run the risk of being subjected to the same censure with those, who, through the neglect of them, have made shipwreck of the faith. Affected with such considerations, he not only told his son in the ministry, what was incumbent on him to practise and preach, but exhorted him to preach and practise accordingly. Exhortation carries something of the pathos in the very nature of it, and supposeth conclusive and persuasive arguments, couched or expressed, to obtain men's compliance with it. When, therefore, our apostle said, "I exhort," it is, emphatically, expressive of his earnest and hearty concern to prevail; as his reference to the foregoing chapter, was, of the arguments by which he meant to succeed.

Had Paul addrest this exhortation in particular, as he did the epistle in general, to Timothy, it might have been inferred, that the duty was only of a temporary nature, and, at most, extended to the age in which Timothy lived; but, as it is not, "I exhort thee," which would have wore an exclusive air in it; but, "I exhort," which is evidently an universal direction; it is abundantly plain he intended, that the commanding force of the exhortation should extend to all the members and office-bearers in the church of Christ, until the mystery of God should be finished.

The subjects of this Christian concern, according to our reading of the text, are not persons of one or another denomination only, but of all denominations; for the apostle enjoins, that the duties under view be performed "for all men." In whatever respects they may differ, as to nation, language, kindred, government, principles, or practices,—as

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nen, there is an undoubted relation, an indissoluble connection, that no distance, no circumstance, can render void and null; for God "hath of one blood made all the nations of the earth:" and they, having all sprung from one original, and descended from the same common parent, should, in performance of the duties here recommended, act toward each other as brethren,—as dear brethren according to the flesh.

Whether, in this exhortation, the apostle means, that Christians should exercise such concern *for all men*, as our translation, with great propriety, bears; or, that such concern should be exercised *by all men*, according to the critical remark offered before, there is no room for dispute, that kings and those in authority, are, in a special manner, the subjects in whom the Christian concern, pointed out by our text, should center.

With regard to our late sovereign, of happy memory, "supplications, prayers, and intercessions," are now no more to be made by us; if it is not for the divine blessing upon such plans of operation as were approved, or begun to be execute under his eye, though, in the infinite wisdom of God, his desire of seeing the speedy and happy issue of them was denied. Though, we say, his, justly and generally lamented, death, supercedes the necessity of "supplications, prayers, and intercessions," for himself, it dissolves not the obligation upon us to give thanks to that God, "by whom kings reign, and princes decree justice," for the numberless blessings, whereof, to his happy subjects, he was, in the hand of God, the chearful instrument. If no nation under heaven, has enjoyed equal peace, safety, freedom, and outward happiness, with the subjects of the British crown, for above thirty three years back, will it not follow, that, of all others,
Britons

and those in Authority.

Britons are obliged,—indispensibly obliged, to exercise of thanksgiving and praise.

A digression here, on the character of that illustrious and royal personage, whose memory may be dear to Britons in particular, and Protestants general, would be no less agreeable to me, than acceptable to you; but diffidence of my own ability, for such an unequal task, lays me under the painful necessity of leaving you to imagine, rather than hear, what I would, was I capable; gladly say without meaning, in the least, to exaggerate,—my talents for the cabinet or the field, if love to his subjects, veneration for the laws, concern for the Protestant interest, charity and compassion, justice and impartiality, and, in one word,—if an unwearied endeavour to diffuse or promote happiness and prosperity; if these, and such as these, constitute the truly loyal and princely character, it may, from all I have had access to learn, be justly applied to our late dear and honoured sovereign.

Nor can I help observing the propriety of these lands appearing now in sable weeds: Do we mourn the loss of a friend, a benefactor, a guide, a protector, a father? In him, my brethren, we have lost one who stood and acted towards us in all these endearing relations; whence, gratitude, affection, and even decency itself, conspire to justify such expressions of sorrow and distress.

I shall have done with this digression, when I have just put you in mind, that ingratitude to the God of gods, for the last peaceful and benign reign, might justly provoke him to blast our expectations, however promising, respecting the tranquility and happiness of future years.

My text, as the proper clue to this discourse, would lead me next to point out the present subjects, in whom our “supplications, prayers, inter-

"cessions, and giving of thanks," should particularly meet,—our sovereign, namely, and those in authority; but, previous to our doing so, the following corollaries, from what you have heard, may may not be useless.

If these things are so, then it follows, that Christianity inspires with a truly public and generous spirit. Those whose concern is confined to themselves, or extends not beyond the limits of any particular order of men, or denomination of Christians, may put in what claim to the venerable character they please; but they show, to demonstration, how small, and how groundless, their pretensions. Such pitiful souls were never formed upon the gospel of Christ, and such groveling creatures deserve not so much as a name amongst his friends.

But, from what was said, it is equally plain, that concern for others, which is not expressed by "supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks," whatever it may be in the eye of mortals,—weighed in the balance of scripture, is found wanting,—it deserves not the name. Men may talk respectfully of others, and perform many useful services to them; as to princes, they may fight under their banners, sit at their council-boards, carry their orders into execution, and be scrupulously exact in every outward expression of loyalty and esteem, while, living in the habitual neglect of the duties prescribed by our apostle, they are held, in the estimate of heaven, as chargeable with the most criminal contempt of the interest of others,—whether princes or people.

In fine, From this doctrine, it evidently appears, that such a disinterested regard to the happiness of others, claims a principal share in our public solemn worship. As a part of the church of Christ, we should make conscience of keeping the ends of
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his appointment, by our meeting together, full in view. If our apostle is allowed to have wrote this letter to Timothy, under the influence of inspiration, then "supplications, prayers, intercessions, " and giving of thanks," for others, must be classed amongst the ordinances of heaven; consequently, must be performed by us with faithfulness and concern, as we would not be found chargeable with neglecting to observe any one of the "all " things whatsoever he hath commanded us." These duties, in our church capacity, are not to be performed as so many words of course, which has too much, and long been our reproach; but with a particular earnestness and fervour, according to the obligation, importance, and necessity of them.

S E R M O N II.

I TIM. ii. 1, 2. *I exhort therefore, &c.*

THOSE for whom the apostle would have Christians, so particularly, to interest themselves, are "kings, and all that are in authority."

The exhortation having a respect to Christians in general, plainly insinuates, that without excluding their generous concern for others, elsewhere intrusted with the regal power, "supplications, " prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks," are especially to be made, for the royal person who sways the sceptre over themselves.

It was easy for the apostle to see, that Christians would, by their birth, stations, and places of residence, be scattered through the dominions of different potentates; and therefore, when he men-

tions the privilege of "leading a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty," and mentions it, as one end they should have in view, by complying with the exhortation in our text;—it needs no argument to prove, that the particular sovereign, under whose administration that end can only be reached, has a first claim to the exercise here recommended.

For foreign princes, the concern of Christians should be regulated, according as circumstances do, or may, direct. All of them have a title from this apostolical warrant, to the "supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings," of Christians, in as far as their spiritual and eternal good require: if unconverted, their conversion to God, through Jesus Christ, should be the burden of the exercise under view; and if the fruits of conversion are brought forth by them, then "giving of thanks" is the Christian's province and duty. If they are joined in a friendly alliance with the sovereign, under whom Christians "lead a quiet and peaceable life," the exercise of this concern may, with greater safety, be extended to the temporal, as well as spiritual interests of such princes. But if upon the opposite side, or merely neutral in the public controversy, the Christian's concern, for their outward prosperity, must not be inconsistent with what is due to their own sovereign, and the community of which they make a part.

With these limitations, it is highly worthy the Christian character, and particularly expressive of the Christian temper, to extend the concern, here recommended by our apostle, to kings in general, and all in authority under them.

Perhaps this view of the matter may differ,—widely differ, from what even Christians themselves have been

been accustomed to think and practise ; but if it has a foundation in the New Testament, as a part of the counsel of God, it should be honestly declared, and suitable compliance with it universally obtained. If it is the will of God, that "all men" should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the "truth," how do Christians instruct their conformity to that will, if they have no concern for the salvation of others, whatever their station or character, whatever their connections or political system? Such an unbounded compassion, can, with no degree of justice, be constructed as, any how, subversive of the special interest in their concern, to which their immediate superiors have an indisputable right ; nor is it, in the least, inconsistent with that interest, unless it could be alledged, that none of opposite nations and alliances from them, can have a place in the better world, where—entire, universal, everlasting concord, harmony and friendship, invariably reign ; which is so absurd in itself, and so contrary to the very genius of the gospel, that, to the most superficial student of the scriptures, it must, at first sight, appear.

The influence of kings over their subjects, and of those in authority over the inferior tribes of men, at once accounts for the apostle's recommending them, so explicitly, to the concern of the churches of Christ ; for though no natural nor political parents, can transfer grace to others, their authority and example may have incredible influence on an external reformation, if not on men's seeking after the like precious grace with themselves. Hence, an inspired politician assures us, that "when the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice : but when the wicked bear rule, the people mourn," Prov. xxix. 1. According to this view, when Christians exercise a proper concern for the reformation

mation of kings, and those in authority, their concern, in effect, reaches to all, without distinction, whose principles and practices may be bettered by it.

With regard to ourselves; though, as men, all nations; as Christians, the whole Christian world; and, as Protestants, every country and kingdom distinguished by that name, should ly upon our hearts, and have a share in our concern at the throne of grace; yet, my brethren, as Britons, joined to those other relations, our British sovereign has a peculiar title to the concern expressed in this exhortation.

It is impossible to think—of his juvenile-years, his high station, his important office, the variety and weight of business laid upon him, the critical conjuncture of affairs at his accession to the throne, the temptations with which he must be surrounded, the common enemies of liberty and true religion, against whom he is our royal guardian, and to think of the very acclamations of loyalty and pleasure, so universally heard amongst his loving subjects; it is impossible to think of these things, without discovering the propriety of “supplications, prayers, and intercessions,” in his behalf. If exposed to evils, not only in common with others, as men, but, peculiar to the pinnacle of dignity and eminence, upon which, as an imperial monarch, he stands,—can the necessity of deprecation bear the smallest dispute? And if he not only needs gifts and graces, with the exercise and improvement of them, as the man and the Christian; but, as the king and the supreme magistrate; are not *prayers* for him equally needful, and, by his subjects, a tribute proportionally due? *Intercessions*, therefore, in both these views, become the duty of the subjects, as
they

they are, by apostolical authority, the right and privilege of the sovereign.

Nor is *thanksgiving*, upon the occasion, to be neglected, or performed without the warmest sentiments of love and gratitude to God. Many circumstances, my brethren, in this noticeable providence, conspire to enforce that duty, to excite that exercise, and to obtain an universal compliance with this part of our apostle's exhortation.

Can we reflect on the preservation of our late sovereign, until the years of his royal successor's majority were more than numbered? Can we think of the British throne being now filled with a native of our happy isle? Can we hear of such regards to true Christianity appearing in him, as are not common to his years, far less to his exalted station? Can we understand his royal purpose to lay out himself, and make it the business of his life, to preserve our invaluable privileges, and transmit them entire to posterity? Can we learn from his own mouth, that, in discharge of the trust reposed in him, he resolves to depend on the advice and assistance, not of his council alone, but of *every honest man*? In a word, can we, of this part of the united kingdom, be certainly informed of his undertaking, by oath, to secure us in the free exercise of the Presbyterian religion, according to our constitutional laws? Can we advert to these things, without, at once, seeing cause, feeling and expressing sentiments, of manifold gratitude to God our Saviour, for all his benefits?

There is something, my brethren, in our very constitution itself, that, on every unprejudiced mind, must have a constraining influence, toward the end of the exhortation being reached. Instead of an absolute monarch, whose will is the only law, and whose subjects are hereditary slaves, our august sovereign

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animated by the complication of them all, in their late royal master, have rendered Britain respectable amongst different nations abroad, as well as endeared the eminent persons themselves to their countrymen at home. And has not our present sovereign, given reason for the further exercise of that gratitude to Jehovah our God, in the judicious measure of continuing these servants, in their respective offices, at least, for several months to come? Who knows but this is the result of his asking, and getting wisdom from that God, "who giveth liberally, and upbraideth not?" Can you ever reflect on his retiring to his closet, if public fame may be trusted, when first informed of the crown devolving upon him, without imagining that you see the royal, the lovely youth, prostrate before the *King of kings*, and hear him, in the words of an illustrious eastern monarch, say, "Give therefore, O Lord my God, unto thy servant, an understanding heart, to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?" 1 Kings iii. 9. May the event demonstrate, that the same answer was given to him, from the hearer of prayer, which young Solomon received, "Behold, I have done according to thy words," ver. 12.

To return The eminent persons, whom Christians should remember, with concern, at the throne of grace, are those who are so,—either in respect of extraction or office. The former include the whole peerage and grandees of the nation, with others, whose circumstances in the world, set them on a level, for influence and capacity of usefulness. These, though employed in no office of the state or the crown, have much in their power, toward promoting or suppressing the interests of true Christianity; and, therefore, that Christians may lead the quiet

quiet and peaceable life mentioned by the apostle, it is useful, it is necessary, that such persons be comprehended in their "supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings."

In this passage, however, it is more than probable, that those eminent in respect of office, are more chiefly pointed out. Being entrusted by their king or country, with the concerns of the nation, the manner in which that trust is discharged, may, nay, must infallibly affect the interest of individuals.

Those with whom the legislative power is lodged, claim our first regard; that public statutes may be always public blessings; and, if in any thing, oppression is enacted, that it may, by their authority, be repealed.

The king's council is an eminent place, and all its members are men in authority; that, therefore, they may so consult and advise, in what comes before them, as shall most secure the honour of their sovereign, and the good of their country, should be the burden of the Christian's concern in their behalf.

The secretaries of state are in such eminent place, as makes them no less need the intercession of Christians, than it intitles them to it. The receiving and making all dispatches from or to foreign parts; the representing the subjects to the sovereign, and the sovereign to the subjects, as to addresses and answers; the preparing business for the council-board, and making proposals of public concern to them. These and such things are their immediate province, and, on the right discharge of them, it is easy to see how much the common good must necessarily depend. Need I put you in mind of the singular benefits Britain and her colonies have reaped from that very quarter, since the commencement of the present war? The ministerial character has been highly honoured in
the

the diligence, capacity, resolution, patriotism, and other diffusive virtues, so illustriously displayed in the conduct of one, equally trusted by his king, and admired by his country. Without meaning to derogate from the praise justly due to his noble and illustrious colleague, the ministry of a *Pit* will cut a resplendent figure in the British annals, long after we are gathered to our fathers.

The gentlemen of the sword may be considered as likewise in authority, or eminent places: those of them we mean, who command in the fleet or army, and are entrusted by the government, with the execution of the most important orders. The peculiar risque they run, and danger to which they are exposed, should recommend them, and their brave followers, to the special concern of the church of Christ.

Need we mention the eminent places of judges and magistrates through the land, as what instruct their right to the "supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings," of Christians? To their interpretation of the laws, and interposition of authority, our peace and quiet, as men and Christians, are more immediately owing; and, therefore, by a particular concern for them, our gratitude to God should be more immediately expressed.

The college of justice, in particular, has, to this kingdom, been, generally, and with great truth, considered as the most substantial blessing; for the senators of it are not only a proper check upon all inferior and less qualified courts; but the manner of their procedure in judgment is so modelled, that the mean and obscure are equally encouraged to expect the fairest hearing, and justest deliverance, from that bench, with the noble and the great.

Taking

Taking that court complexly,—in the characters and superior abilities of the judges, the extent of their privileges, the greatness of their power, the length of their attendance, the order, decorum, and solemnity of their forms, the number and erudition of their barristers, together with the weight and influence of their decisions, it will, in Europe itself, be equalled by few courts of judicature, scarce excelled by any. While, therefore, Christians should exercise a holy gratitude to God, for such an effectual security from the caprice and oppression of their fellow-subjects, they are indispensibly bound to make intercessions for such as have the honour to fill those eminent places, that the spirit of their station may be given them; and that, in the faithful and judicious discharge of their office, they may, under God, be for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well.

The end, to themselves, that Christians may propose by such concern “for kings, and all that are “in authority,” should next fall under our view; namely, “that we may lead a quiet and peaceable “life, in all godliness and honesty.” The kingdom of Christ is a kingdom of peace, and the end of it is quietness for ever; godliness, as Christians, and honesty, as men, are equally the ambition and endeavour of all its subjects: every lawful mean, toward the enjoyment of such quietness and peace, so as to have freedom to exercise godliness and honesty, is incumbent on them: that prescribed in our text, is not only lawful, but laudable; not only so, but vastly conducive to the end in view; wherefore, without excluding motives of the generous and disinterested kind, it is evidently the interest, as well as the duty, of Christians, to make “supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving

“ &c

"thanks for all men," in general, "for kings and eminent persons" in particular.

In the meaning, the interpreting, and carrying in- to execution the laws, belong to them, does it not, at once, appear, how much is in their power, to ren- der the Christian's life quiet and peaceable; to give him no temptation to ungodliness, by persecution; nor to dishonesty, by oppression? Whence, the propriety of the mean recommended in our text, for reaching the end mentioned by the apostle, is so obvious, that he who runs may read.

But, on this part of the subject, we will not now enlarge. From what observations have been made, the following conclusions will appear to be natural and easy.

That, when men ly under no temptations from the severity of laws, or rigour in those who carry them into execution, to the practice of ungodline- or dishonesty, their giving indulgence to the one or the other, must be a heinous aggravation of the crime. Aggravation of it, we say, because such a practice would be criminal in any, whatever situa- on; but if so,—where godliness cannot be profess- ed, unless at the peril of life and liberty; nor honest- y cultivated, unless at the risque of poverty and war; what must be the crimson hue, and what the scarlet dye of these offences, where no such temptation from the government, or our governors, fall in way?

Temptations, did I say, from the government or our governors, to the practice of ungodline- or dishonesty? The reverse, my bretheren, of th- is the delightful truth; for, toward the suppre- sion of wickedness and immorality of all kind- we have many salutary laws; though it must be confessed, to whose ignominy every one must see that in the execution of them there has been a last- ing

ing, perhaps, an universal defect. That reproach, however, bids fair to be soon wiped away, since, by a recent proclamation from the throne, the carrying of those laws into immediate execution, against all-offenders without distinction, is expressly commanded; and commanded, as the executors of the law shall be answerable to their royal master.

In place, therefore, of our lying under any temptation to such ignoble and dissolute practices, the temptation is happily thrown, by our sovereign, into the opposite scale.

That under the present government, distinguished for mildness and forbearance, if men lead not a quiet and peaceable life, it must be accounted for from another cause; their own turbulent spirits, namely, with a stupid ingratitude for liberties and privileges, the acquiring whereof cost our fathers so much blood and treasure. And if the cause arises from themselves, it is their own faults, and they alone shall bear it, if timeous reformation intervene not.

That our dear young king should have a constant and particular share in our concern before God. Tho', as to some, the indispensable nature of this duty may have never occurred before, as it appears now, to demonstration, from our text, let none be so hardy, none so disobedient, as continue in the neglect, or practical contempt of it. Imagine it not enough to join in the public prayers for him, and those in authority; but carry the petitions and supplications with you, in your family and personal approaches to God. With what confidence can you expect he will be made a blessing to you, if you are not, though expressly enjoined, at the pains to ask it? Shall he take the weight of the government upon his shoulders, and will you, in the exercise of prayer and supplication, bear no part with him?

him? Would there, let the prayerless say, in the event of our great hopes becoming abortive, the least propriety in your murmurings and complaints? Let the exhortation, my brethren, on the accounts suggested, be cheerfully and immediately complied with. And may the Lord give understanding in all things.

S E

S E R M O N III.

T H E

E X C I S I O N ;

O R,

TR O U B L E R S O F T H E C H U R C H C H A R A C T E R -
I Z E D A N D C U T O F F *.

G A L A T. V. 12.

I would they were even cut off which trouble you.

THIS letter was wrote by the apostle of the Gentiles, and addressed to the churches of Galatia. The date of it is uncertain ; and, therefore, the opinions of the learned, concerning that circumstance, are various. Paul, here, had two ends, particularly, in view : one, the reproof of the Galatians, for receiving doctrines subversive of the gospel which he had preached amongst them ; the other, the vindication of his own character and authority, as an apostle of Christ, which the Judaizing teachers had endeavoured to undermine. Having discussed both these, our apostle warmly exhorted his correspondents, to steadfastness and perseverance in the persuation of gospel truths ; the enjoyment

* This sermon was preached on the 8th of April, 1762 ; at the admission of the Rev. Mr. Alexander Muodie, to the parish of Riccarton.

enjoyment of gospel privileges; and the performance of every scriptural duty.

Though the apostle saw cause for administering the sharpest rebukes to these churches, for giving heed to false, anti christian teachers; he, by no means, thought the teachers themselves inculpable, nor meant that they should be unpunished: on the contrary, he found fault with them once, again, and again, chap. i. 7. and v. 10, 12.—With regard to the reproofs such teachers had exposed themselves to, Paul wrote, probably, as a prophet in the tenth verse; “He that troubleth you *shall* bear his judgment, whosoever he be:” and, in the words of our text, expressed his *wish* towards the accomplishment of that prediction or threatening.—From that verse, some imagine the apostle had one particular heretic in his eye: but, as they are spoke of in the plural every where else through the epistle, we apprehend it is much more probable, that the churches of Galatia were pestered with many such blind, or designing, guides.

The grand error, into which they drew the Christian converts, will appear in the sequel; and, therefore, we shall only now observe, that it was, the apostle’s estimate, ruining to souls; and so mischievous to the interests of the gospel, as extorted from his holy soul, a wish, which, at first sight would seem inconsistent with the Christian gentleness and forbearance, so eminently exemplified in Paul’s whole character:—at first sight, we said because, in prosecution of this subject, we hope to make it appear, in how many respects the wish, under consideration, may, consistently with a gospel meekness and benevolence, be both adopted and justified.

Our method, through divine assistance, shall be,

- I. To consider in what respects, particular office-bearers in the church may trouble the church.
- II. To show in what view their excision may be wished and prayed for by Christians.
- III. To apply what shall be said, suitably to the occasion of this meeting.

That office-bearers may be troublers of the church, is so evident from this epistle, that he who runs may read:—nor evident from this epistle only, but from various other notices also, through the sacred records.—Were not Hophni and Phineas troublers of the church of Israel? 1 Sam ii. Was not Judas Iscariot a troubler of the original apostolic church? Matth. x. 4. Were not certain men, who went out from Jerusalem, troublers of the church at Antioch? Acts xv. 24. Were there not many, especially they of the circumcision, who troubled the Cretians? Tit. i. 10, 11. Doubtless.—The holy scriptures, having transmitted their several histories, put the truth of this hypothesis beyond doubt.—But if recourse is had to profane history, the amount of such characters would swell far beyond due bounds. Valentinus *, Cerdon, and others, during the three first centuries; Arius

* VALENTINUS was an Egyptian, who flourished between the years 140 and 160. He reduced the doctrines of the Gnostics into a regular system; and, enraged by a disappointment from the church, propagated them with an inflamed zeal, first in Egypt, and then at Rome. His scheme chiefly consisted in realizing the divine attributes, or Platonic ideas; making different persons of them, to compose his *pleroma*, or complete Deity. See Dupin's church history, vol. II. p. 42. etc.

Arius, Priscillian, and others, in the fourth century *; Pelagius, and others, in the fifth §; So-

As for CERDON, he came from Syria to Rome, between the years 139 and 143, under the pontificate of Hyginus. His notions, which he spread with no less success than zeal, were, That the God of the law was a malignant, and the Father of Christ a good being;—that Jesus was neither born, nor possessed of a true body;—that his Father sent him to destroy the tyranny and works of the Lawgiver;—that there was no resurrection;—and that the law and the prophets merited no regard. See Dupin's church history, vol. II. p. 47, *etc.*

* ARIUS, a native of Lybia Cyrenaica, was a priest of the church of Alexandria. The error by which he was distinguished, and for which his bishop condemned him in the 320, consisted in the gross notion he had of the *ho Logos*, or word; counting Jesus Christ a mere creature, of a different substance from the Father; one who had a beginning, and was capable of change. He began to publish that error in the 318; and continued to dogmatize until after the 334, when his reposition by the bishop of Constantinople was prevented by his sudden death. See Dupin's church history, vol. II. p. 104, *etc.*

The errors of PRISCILLIAN, which began to make a noise in the 379, were a complication of many former heresies, with additions and improvements of his own and his followers: they are reduced to fifteen heads. See Dupin's church hist. vol. II. p. 123, 125, *etc.*

§ PELAGIUS, a native of our own island, began to teach his errors at Rome, in the 400: They consisted chiefly of these three,—That man's merit procured grace;—that man in a present state, may arrive at perfect freedom from passions and sin;—and that there is no such thing as original sin at all, but that men are naturally inclined to good, without the assistance of grace. *Ibid.* p. 118, *etc.*

cius,

cinus, and many others, in later centuries †; are all standing proofs that the churches have never wanted troublers within their own bosoms, nor wounds received from the hands of professed friends.

Taking this hypothesis then for granted, "That office-bearers may trouble the church," the import of the term, here used by the apostle, may be illustrated, as an useful preliminary to what follows. It properly signifies ‡, "those who shake the foundation upon which you stand, in such a manner, as to make your confidence in it to totter; and put the superstructure you raised upon it, in a falling posture §." Or, may not the phrase be a figure borrowed from the agitation given to any fluid, by shaking the vessel in which it is contained ||? If so, it is a lively description of—what perturbation of mind, to particular Christians; and of what distractions, in particular churches, such troublers may be the occasion.—Secret doubtfulness, instead of a firm belief;—heart anxiety, instead of holy composure;—jealousy also, instead of confidence;—divisions, instead of harmony;—alienation, instead of fervent love amongst Christians;—sliding, moreover, into errors, both in speculation and practice, instead of cleaving to the

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Lord

† SocINUS taught, that Jesus Christ was not God; and that the Holy Ghost was not a person, but a simple virtue. He began to vent his errors in Italy about 1546, and died in Poland, May 1604. See Dupin's Church history, vol. IV. p. 124.

‡ *Hoi anastatountes umas.*

§ Vide Pasor. Lexicon, in verbum *anastatoo*.

|| Thus the verb *tarasso*, which is used by this apostle, chap. i. 7. and v. 10. in the same sense with *anastatoo* here, is a figure borrowed from that very thing. Vide Pasor. Lexicon, p. 474.

Lord and his truths with full purpose of heart; are but a part of the troubles brought upon Christians and churches, by persons of the character under view: For these things, being the sins as well as sufferings of church members, deserve and draw down judgments, whereof those who trouble the church are, at least, the indirect causes. Thus, when the church of Israel was smitten by the men of Achan, Achan's transgression having procured that stroke, "Joshua said unto him, why hast thou troubled us?" Josh. vii. 25. And when many in the church were drawn, by the example of their king, from the worship of God, to the service of idols, and had thereby brought down the sword of famine upon the land of Israel; in an address to Ahab, a most idolatrous prince, Elijah said, "I have not troubled Israel, but thou and thy father's house," 1 Kings xviii. 18. Which brings us to the main purpose of the

I. Head, To consider, namely, in what respect particular office-bearers in the church of Christ may trouble the church.

They may do so in the following views,—by the following means.

1. By a groveling, mercenary temper of mind,
2. By unscriptural doctrine.
3. By laxness in communion, and oppressive measures in the exercise of discipline and government.—And,
4. By untenderness in their lives and conversations.

1. Office-bearers may trouble the church by a groveling, mercenary, temper of mind.—The views which determine one's choice of the ministerial function, must be chiefly professed, through his whole labours in the gospel.—If "zeal for the honour of God, love to Jesus Christ, and desire of saving

" saving souls, are mens great motives and chief inducements to enter into the function of the " holy ministry * ;" these views bid fair to run through all their endeavours, in discharging that important trust ; and, therefore, to render such persons " workers together with God," rather than troublers of the church. Such were the motives of our apostle, in entering upon the discharge of his ministry ; and, accordingly, we find, what mighty influence they had through the whole of his work : " I will not be burdensome to you (said he to the Corinthians) ; for I seek not yours, but you :—and I will very gladly spend " and be spent for you," 2 Cor. xii. 14, 15.—Whereas, if " worldly designs and interests §" are mens only leading inducements to enter into that sacred function, the promotion of these being chiefly in their eye, they will prosecute the ends of a gospel ministry only—in a subserviency to them. Their heads cannot be set on the fleece, and on the interests of the flock, at the same time ; if *that* is uppermost with them, *these* must be proportionably neglected. " Wo be to the shepherds " of Israel, said the Lord God, that do feed themselves ; should not the shepherds feed the flocks ? " Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, " but ye feed not the flock," Ezek. xxxiv. 2, 3. And on this very account, a lasting stigma lies upon the character of a once fellow labourer with Paul ; " Demas hath forsaken me, having loved " this present world," 2 Tim. iv. 10.

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* These are the very words of the sixth question put to ministers at their ordination. See Assem. 1711. Act 10.

§ Motives, abjured by ministers at their ordination. See Quest. 6. Act 10. Assem. 1711.

As such a pitiful temper must insensibly grow upon them, it cannot fail of discovering itself, in their general deportment and behaviour; by which means their pastoral endeavours, used with whatever assiduity, lose much,—perhaps most,—if not the whole of that influence, they might otherwise been attended with: for, let the worldling himself say, with what success can they be supposed to recommend a superlative regard to divine things upon others, in whom the love of the world, and seen things, evidently reigns? He reasons well, say they of such a teacher, for heavenly-mindedness; his arguments against setting our affections on the world, are quite conclusive: but, as we know, that he “crouches for a piece of silver himself, “and labours *only* for a morsel of bread,” 1 Sam. ii. 36. all he can say, is no more than a sounding brass, no better to us than a tinkling cymbal.—Preferring, therefore, the business, the pleasures, or the profits of life, to the important ends of a gospel ministry, office-bearers may trouble the church, and merit the excision prayed for in our text.

2. Particular office-bearers may trouble the church of Christ,—by unscriptural doctrine.—Doctrine may be considered as unscriptural three ways, either of which are equally characteristical of the persons under view.

Exploding any scripture truth, is one kind of doctrine, whereby men, bearing office, may trouble the church.—This may be done, by either shunning to declare the whole counsel of God,—dwelling on favourite topics only, to the neglect of others, equally necessary and important; or done, by actually impugning certain parts of the Christian system, and treating them with contempt.—The former would leave hearers in ignorance; the

the latter, land them in errors :—saints would be starved by the one ; sinners poisoned by the other. —Copying after the Athenian or Roman sages, public teachers would circumscribe their instructions within too narrow bounds ; for, in all the systems of Greece and Rome, no peculiar doctrines of the gospel can be found.—Confining themselves, therefore, to the topics which rendered Heathen teachers famous ;—would not Christian teachers bring infamy upon their characters,—and indelible reproach ?—What was virtuous in *these*, having no access to divine revelation, would, without more, be vicious in *these*, privileged with the sacred records.

But, if office-bearers, in the church of Christ, should actually impugn and reject any gospel doctrine, they would thereby trouble the church, in a more direct and positive view.—By shunning to declare Bible truths, teachers would probably do little or no good : but, by setting up in opposition to them, they certainly behaved to do great hurt. By the former, they would only not build ; but, by the latter, would they not evidently pull down the building ?—If church officers should form their doctrines upon the “ Popish, Arian, Socinian, Arminian, or Bourignian *” schemes of religion ; then some of the most interesting truths would be shamefully buried :—the prescience of God ; his eternal decrees ; the divinity of Christ ; the necessity of grace ; the perseverance of saints † ;

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and

* Doctrines disowned by ministers at their ordination, according to Quest. 3. Act 10. Assen. 1711.

† The most of these were comprehended in the Bourignian system.—Madam Antonia Bourignon is the reputed author.—See her writings condemned, Act 11. Assen. 1701.

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and such like, behoved, one or other, more or all of them, in that event, to be expunged from their creed :—and could—say, if such teachers could be considered in any other, in any better light, than as troublers of the church ?—Would not sinners thereby be robbed of much knowledge, and saints of much comfort, they might otherwise,—the one have attained, and the other have enjoyed ?—Vastly different from this was the apostle's plan of doctrine ; for to the elders of Ephesus, he could confidently say, “ I take you to record, that I am pure “ from the blood of all men ; for I have not shunned to declare unto you, *all* the counsel of “ God,” Acts xx. 26, 27.

Again, as office-bearers may trouble the church, by subtracting from ; so also, by adding to ; the doctrines of the gospel. “ Ye have made the commandment of God (said our Lord to the Pharisees) of none effect, by your tradition,” Matth. xv. 6. And to their unspeakable mortification, was pleased to add, “ In vain do ye worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men,” Matth. xv. 9.—In as far, therefore, as church officers teach men to put any authority whatever on a level with the written word, in so far are they criminally chargeable with unscriptural doctrine. By not speaking “ according to the law and the testimony,” do they not prove that “ there is no light in them ?” Is. viii. 20.—And, if they, being lightless, lead those who are blind ; let any one say, if either can fail of falling into the ditch ?—A plain demonstration this, how troublesome to the

The decrees of God ;—the necessity and efficacy of grace ;—the perseverance of saints, *etc.* were maintained against the Arminians, or Remonstrants, by the synod of Dort, which met Nov. 1. 1618. and sat till the 11th of May 1619.

the churches, teachers of this character would b

Adding to the doctrines of the word oblique thrusts at the honour of God; as if infinite wisdom and love had not sufficiently provided for the edification and salvation of the church, would i not argue, that a discretionary power was left with men to supply such imagined defects?—Nor would arbitrary additions be less destructive to souls, than dishonouring to the Lord; for, by admitting them in one instance, a foundation is laid for admitting them in another, until sight of the written word be intirely lost, and mens regards to the authority of it wholly obliterated.

A credulous turn of mind, with respect to human authority, or an unreasonable indulgence to the dictates of fancy, are the things upon which this dangerous error will probably turn.—Weak men are most liable to the first; and wicked men to the last.—Want of judgment occasions the one; and conceit of one's judgment, the other—*That* argues, their having no wisdom to guide themselves; and *this*, their being too wise to submit to foreign direction.—Should such teachers multiply in a church, would not antient trumperies be revived, or other innovations introduced, to the manifest prejudice of the truth as it is in Jesus?—If past errors were adopted, then the Pleroma of Platonic Christians, instead of the *one* God*;—the twofold human nature, ascribed by Bourignons and others, to Jesus Christ †;—the five supernu-

G 5 merary

* The Pleroma, or plenitude of the Deity, consisted, according to Valentinus, of thirty Eons or attributes. See Dupin's church history, vol. II. p. 43.

† Madam Antonia Bourignon alleged that Christ had one human nature which was produced of Adam before Eve was formed; and the other born of the Virgin Mary. See Act II. Assen. 1701.

merary sacraments introduced by the Papists * and such like monstrous additions might be taught : — But, if, in matters of doctrine, full swing was given to the luxuriant, the unsanctified imagination, it is impossible to say where that swelling presumption might end, or its proud waves be stayed.—One nostrum, in that event, behoved to introduce or succeed another, until the whole credenda of religion became altogether fluctuating and precarious :—nay, should this mode of doctrines become universal, in the christian church, every age would produce a new creed ; and Bible truths, through length of time, be lost among the lumber of human inventions.

Once more ; as office-bearers may trouble the church, by subtracting from, or adding unto, the doctrines of revelation ; so, by an undue arrangement or application of scripture doctrines themselves. This seems to have been Paul's principal quarrel with the teachers at Galatia ; for, when persecution arose against the Gentile converts, for rejecting the usages of the ceremonial law ; these teachers, influenced by carnal prudence, warmly recommended circumcision, as not only expedient, but indispensibly binding : “ They constrain you “ (said our apostle) to be circumcised, only lest “ they should suffer persecution for the cross of “ Christ,” Gal. vi. 12.—Circumcision was a scripture doctrine ; and, under the Old Testament dispensation, enjoined by divine authority : but the teachers Paul had in view, grossly mis-timed their exhortations to it, by addressing them to New Testament churches : and the pressing this, as a duty,

* The five Popish sacraments exploded, by the reformed churches, are, confirmation, penance, extreme unction, ordination, and marriage.

duty, upon Gentile converts, was particularly erroneous ; since, by a decree of the inspired church at Jerusalem, they were exempted from the necessity of circumcision, Acts xv.

The recommending of this, however, was not what the apostle accounted the worst office, to the churches, of these Judaizing teachers ;—their making circumcision absolute necessary, in order to mens justification ; or, to their giving proper evidences of a justified state, was the snake—the deadly snake in the grass.—That they did so, appears from what teachers of the same stamp argued with the Christians at Antioch, saying, “ Except ye be circumcised, after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved,” Acts xv. 1. And that Paul considered this doctrine in a most pernicious light, appears from his strong declaration in the preceding context, “ Behold I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing,” Gal. v. 2. That is, If ye, by circumcision, as a mean, or instrumental condition, seek or expect an interest in justification, you can have no profit through the satisfaction of Christ ; for the exercise of faith is the alone mean whereby such profit can be reaped and enjoyed ; or, where-with it is inseparably connected in the treaty of reconciliation.—Besides, circumcision, being an institution of the ceremonial law, was a virtual obligation upon men to abide by the Old Testament oecconomy, though doing so was utterly incompatible with their adherence to the gospel plan ; “ For, I testify again (said the apostle) to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law,” Gal. v. 3. So that the practical rejection of God’s method of grace was, in our apostle’s view, an inevitable consequence of that

doctrine which the Judaizing teachers urged with so much zeal upon the churches of Galatia.

Nor is this all, for, from the course of Paul's reasoning, it would seem, he considered circumcision as some how connected with the moral law itself, and with such conformity to it, as these teachers thought more than instrumentally conditional of justification; "Christ (says he) is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified "by the law," Gal. v. 4. Does not this make it more than probable, that the teachers, condemned in our text, led the Galatians to consider their own obedience as a joint meritorious condition, with the righteousness which is by faith, of their pardon and acceptance?

Inculcating universal obedience to God's law is the duty of all gospel ministers; but, to make that obedience meritorious, in whole or in part, of justification, is misplacing and misapplying the most wholesome doctrine: for, the only room it can occupy, upon gospel principles, is, in the second place, as a fruit; by no means in the first, as the cause of justification.—And then, uniting such obedience with the obedience of Christ, so far from correcting the error, makes it much worse; for, such a daring coalition does manifest prejudice to our Lord's most honourable righteousness, as it insinuates an incompleteness of merit, which needs to be made perfect by the righteousness of guilty creatures. And such a coalition is the more dangerous and ensnaring to unwary souls, as the bare mention of Christ's obedience gilds the pill, and baits the hook, to the unquestionable ruin of those who are unskilful in the word of righteousness, and babes only in scriptural knowledge.

Though, therefore, men employed in the holy ministry should occasionally touch at all the doctrines

trines of the word, if they are at no pains to distinguish between one thing and another, and to keep each in its proper place, they may be no less troublers of the church of God, than if doctrines were taken from, or added unto, the inspired system, by their incautious hands.

3. Office-bearers may trouble the church by laxness in communion, and oppressive measures in the exercise of discipline and government.

With regard to the former of these, no doubt; men, bearing office in the house of God, may err upon the opposite hand, by rendering the terms of Christian communion narrower than ever Christ or his apostles did: that extreme may be vastly troublesome to many serious persons; and the promoters of it, in some degree, troublers of the church: but, by an unscriptural laxness in Christian communion, all proper difference between the church and the world proportionally ceaseth. The former extreme circumscribes, indeed, the church within too narrow bounds; but the latter, by blending the church and the world together, leaves no distinct view of either; no proper New Testament church at all.

The church of Israel was not numbered with the nations; and the New Testament churches are every where spoken of as different from the world, and opposite to it; but, if the grossly ignorant, the outwardly profane, the evidently immoral, are allowed to partake of church privileges, in common with true Christians,—would not this, at once, undo the distinction which the Head of his church hath been pleased to make, and bring the world under the same point of view with the church of Christ?

Without pretending to the knowledge of men's hearts, office-bearers in God's house may easily distinguish

distinguish one, who has a competent measure of Bible knowledge, from one who knows nothing of Christianity at all. And does it require any great degree of penetration to find out the difference between the moral and immoral, the sober and intemperate, the man that sweareth, and him that feareth an oath?—Will any person, who reads the scriptures, be at a loss to see which of these belongs to the world, and which to the church? Can he hesitate a moment in determining who is Belial's of the two, and who Christ's?

If, notwithstanding, they should be admitted promiscuously to the same New Testament privileges, the ends of discipline would be doubly marred, and the authors of such a solemn medly two-fold troublers of the church: a practice of this kind would mar the edification of the ignorant, by lulling them asleep in the lap of carnal security; and flattering their vain imagination that they were Christians *indeed*, because partakers of Christian privileges: nor, by such a practice, would the edification of holy persons prove less abortive: for, in proportion as the ignorant and profane are permitted to join in ordinances, and partake of privileges, to which Christians have an exclusive right, —their communion is evidently interrupted; unless it be true, in opposition to Paul's doctrine, that "righteousness may have fellowship with unrighteousness; and light have communion with darkness: that Christ may have concord with Belial; and he that believeth have part with an infidel," 1 Cor. vi. 4.

Whatever mens stations, therefore, in the church, and whatever their reputation in the world, if they are at no pains to distinguish between the precious and the vile; nor between the portions which belong to different persons, as they are saints or sinners;

ners; then, in the views, for the reasons mentioned, they would trouble the church wherein they bear office.—To them it would be owing, should the most worthless think themselves injured, if access to church privileges was denied them; and to them owing, should Christ's little flock be thereby stumbled and offended.—Would not such office-bearers have the blame of deceiving the former, and discouraging the latter?—of causing the one to intermeddle, to their hurt, with things wherein they have no lot or part?—and obliging the other to withdraw from privileges wherein they are scripturally and savingly interested?

But, we said, that office bearers might likewise trouble the church, by oppressive measures in the exercise of discipline and government. Though they have a right from Jesus Christ to rule and govern; in other words, to put his laws, respecting church rule and government, in execution; and to do so without respect of persons: yet, if they should either stretch the laws of the Head too far, or claim obedience from his members to laws of their own, which may be inconsistent with the New Testament plan of church oeconomy; such procedure, varnished over with whatever pretences, would it not trouble the church, and oppress her members?—However extensive the authority our Lord hath given his servants, in managing his affairs upon earth; is not the lordship, over the consciences of his people, reserved in his own hand?—Christians are, indeed, bound to obey those who have the rule over them; but, that such obedience may flow from the faith of a divine authority, and not stand in the wisdom of men, they are to obey them only “in the Lord,” 1 Thess. v. 12. *i. e.* to obey, because they see a scriptural warrant interposed in support of the obedience church officers call for.

More

More particularly, men stretching the laws of Jesus Christ, in matters of discipline and government, behoved to trouble and oppress his members. It is, for instance, an express statute of Christianity, that every church member, who, being in the fault, refuseth to acknowledge his error, and reform his way, shall be, to the church, "as a heathen man and a publican," Matth. xviii. 17. But then, it is no less a law of the kingdom, that such a delinquent, professing and evidencing repentance, shall be restored in the spirit of meekness, Gal vi. 1. not only restored, but comforted also, lest he be swallowed up of over much sorrow, 2 Cor. ii. 7. Should, however, those, bearing office, rob church members of that privilege, granted to them by their adorable Head; or make their enjoyment of it depend upon conditions of human device, would they not be chargeable with the oppression exploded and condemned by the New Testament?

If an unwarrantable stretching of Christ's own laws might be oppressive and troublesome to his members; church officers, claiming obedience to laws wholly their own, would render themselves much more so.—By the former, men are only wise above what is written; by the latter, they are wise in opposition to the written word: the one misinterprets our Lord's statutes; the other contributes toward the destruction of them.

Our Lord has provided that proper discipline be exercised upon heretics and immoral persons. As to heretics, Christians and churches are not to receive them, or bid them God speed, 2 John 10. they are to avoid them, Rom. xvi. 17. and, if nothing less can serve the ends of edification, they are, after a first and second admonition, to reject them, Tit. iii. 10.—With regard again to immo-

ral persons, the law of the Redeemer's kingdom is most particular and explicit; "I have written unto you, (said Paul to the Corinthians) not to keep company, if any man, that is called a brother, be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, with such an one no not to eat," 1 Cor. v. 11.—But, if men, bearing office in the church, should take it upon them to inflict such censures, where neither heresy, upon Bible principles at least, nor immorality, are so much as alleged; then, those, most orthodox in their principles, and exemplary in their lives, might suffer unjustly; and the society, to which they belong, suffer through their punishment.

According as rulers and governors, in any church, give way to a management of this sort, we may expect to see the artillery of discipline pointed against the most holy and useful members, or even office-bearers; and so far rewards and applauses, profusely, poured upon men of a different, opposite, character and deportment. Nor can these views be separated; for the same laws, which are replete with distress to the former, must be pregnant with encouragement to the latter.—Of such despotic and arbitrary measures the Roman catholic churches afford so many awful proofs, that the propriety of supposing oppressions of this kind will bear no dispute. In the history of these churches, would it be a difficult task to find sentences of deposition against ministers, of excommunication against Christians, and of delivering over to the secular arm, against both, founded on no better ground than their refusing to be, say, or do, what, according to their best judgment, was forbidden by Jesus Christ?—Under such administrations the Wicklifs,

liffs, Husses, and Jeroms, must fall * ; while the Wolseys, Beatons, and Gardiners, will rise †.

As church officers are entrusted, by the living Head, with the sword of discipline ; so also with the charter of his people's external privileges, which they are bound faithfully to dispense : but, in the exercise of their government, if they should withhold, from Christ's members, any of those gospel immunities ; usurping to themselves, or letting go to others, what they ought to secure them in the possession of ; could such administration

* **JOHN WICKLIFF**, an Englishman, professor of divinity at Oxford, was prosecuted for his principles of the Reformation, first in the year 1377, before the archbishop of Canterbury. Gregory XI. afterwards ordered the English clergy to summon him to Rome. In consequence of this order he was tried by the prelates in a council held at Lambeth, and enjoined to silence.—In May 1382, his principles were condemned in a council called at London by the archbishop of Canterbury. They obtained an edict from Richard II. ; in consequence whereof many Wickliffites were imprisoned : but Wickliff's death in December 1384, prevented their prosecuting him any further.

JOHN HUSS of Husnitz, and **JEROM** of Prague, his disciple, were both condemned and burnt for adopting and preaching Wickliff's doctrines ; the former anno 1415, and the latter anno 1416. See Dupin's church hist. vol. III. p. 308, *etc.*

† **THOMAS WOLSEY**, first bishop of Lincoln, then at York, and last of all promoted by the pope to a cardinal's hat, in the reign of Henry VIII.

DAVID BEATON, archbishop of St. Andrews, under the same reign, likewise a cardinal.

STEPHEN GARDINER, bishop of Winchester, under the same reign. All bigotted enemies to the reformation, and persecutors of the Reformers. See Rapi-
Smollet, etc. their histories of England.

tion bear, would it deserve, a gentler name than tyranny and oppression? Or, would all the artifice and sophistry they were masters of be able to free them from the apostle's charge, as troublers of the church?—True Christians, by that divine charter, have a right to the ministry of the word, and to the seals of the new covenant; neither of these can be denied them, but in open violation of Immanuel's authority; to explain them therefore away, or refuse to dispense them, in whole or in part, as it dishonours the Head, so it robs and spulzies his members.—Now, who that have surveyed the seat of the beast, where both the use of the scriptures, in general, and the eucharistical cup, in particular, are withheld from the laity, can fail to see, that such robbery and oppression may be committed? and would to God, it could be said with truth, that in all the churches called Reformed, no degree of Protestant Popery had place!

4. Office-bearers may trouble the church by untenderness in their lives and conversations. Their instructions; as servants of Christ; expressly bear, that they should be grave, prudent; blameless, of good report, and, in every respect; ensamples to our Lord's flock: this is so much the case, that neglects or commissions, which might bear an apology in others, are inexcusable in them; and, what would make private Christians shining and eminent, is scarce more than what must necessarily enter into the very constitution of their character.

Where church officers act in character, they teach, reprove, convince and comfort men, by their lives, as well as by their labours in the gospel; and copying out what they say, in what they do, office-bearers bid vastly fair to effect the ends of their ministry amongst saints,—to recommend the Christian scheme to sinners: but, if they preach

one

one thing; and practise another; if they, with whatever warmth and strength of argument, recommend and injoin the prayerful and devout life, while they mind neither closet nor family religion themselves;—recommend the simplicity and godly sincerity, so essential to true religion, while they themselves indulge a political, discover an intriguing spirit;—the equity and justice which run through the whole Christian practice, while imposition and fraud are the distinguishing characteristics of their own conduct among men;—the temperance and sobriety for which holy persons are so remarkable, while luxury and profusion, gluttony and drunkenness, are like gray hairs here and there upon themselves;—in a word, if they recommend and injoin necessary retiredness from the world, while they are perpetually mingled with the idle croud;—and exclaim against courses of life, which are pursued by themselves with greediness and pleasure:—if their words and works are so different, so opposite, so glaringly inconsistent; what—say, what authority, what influence, can they have? what evil can they be supposed to restrain? what virtue to promote? what sinner can their way be a mean of converting? or saint, edifying in love?—If they pull down, by their conversations, faster than they can build, by the discharge of their offices;—the spiritual temple, which they should rear up, suffers, in its progress and prosperity, through their unhallowed hands.

Sinful compliances with unholy men, and conformity to their way, may pass for prudence and discretion; but, in church officers, they are criminal, they are ruining, to the highest degree: for, instead of recommending, by these means, their labours to such persons, they draw down contempt upon themselves, and their labours both.

Let us only, for once, suppose, so many sons of riot and debauch, hearing an elaborate, a pathetic declamation, upon the beauties and advantages of chastity and temperance;—suppose them, admiring an accuracy of method, and elegance of speech;—a justness of sentiment, strength of reasoning, neatness of composition, propriety of gesture, a symmetry and gracefulness, running through the whole address;—and suppose them on the very point of yielding to that united alluring force;—until—oh! “tell it not in Gath”—they recollect, that the orator himself was a companion once with them, in such a foolish ramble, or midnight debauch;—perhaps, that he has oftener—much oftener than once, been equally rakish, and dissolute with themselves: when—how shocking the thought! loosed from the bands which just now constrained and overcame them, they hastily conclude, that all was priestcraft, on the one hand; and revery, on the other: whence, to the honour of the orator! they return, they return, not only with the dog to his vomit again, but, return—more hardened in wickedness,—much more the children of the devil than they were.

The case, however, may be stated in a milder, a less forbidding point of light; and yet, sinful compliances, in church officers, with the world, appear most shameful and pernicious.

Let the gay and the fashionable be supposed to hear the redemption and improvement of time recommended,—with all the combined energy of language, argument, manner, and address; let the present influence of the harangue be intirely to your wish;—one resolves, to quite the gaudy ring;—another, to relinquish the entertainments of the stage;—and a-third, to abandon the bewitching amusements of game:—all—all is done in resolu-
tion;

tion; but,—unhappily for them! disgracefully for him!--the preacher, the preacher, is no sooner remembered, than, like a bowing wall, and tottering fence, their lofty pile of resolved amendments, cracks, shakes, and falls. Is not this he, says the first, by whose melody the sportive consort is often swelled?—this the man, says the second, who kills so many hours at routs and cards?—and this the very person, says the third, generally to be found in the gallery or box?—Yes, say they all; the cheat is detected; the spell broken; and our liberty to live like ourselves, at once restored:—For, was there any truth in the doctrine, would the doctor, himself, venture to sacrifice so much time, as he does, to the purposes of fashionable gaiety, and polite amusements?

To all this we may add, that office-bearers, remarkable for one, or other, or all of the things represented, will, very readily, trouble the church, by the wrong application of their talents and learning; and the more pregnant the one, or extensive the other, their capacity, of hurting the interests of the gospel, must be the greater. Though the truths of Christianity have never shone with more splendour and glory, than under the strongest opposition they may have met with; yet, such opposers, whether Christians or Deists; whether of the clergy or laity, have, according to the degrees of their natural and acquired abilities, been troublers of the church of Christ. The voluminous works of a Bellarmine*; the eloquent performances of his

* ROBERT BELLARMINE, a Tuscanite, entered into the society of Jesuits in 1560, and was made a cardinal by Clement VIII. in 1599. He wrote a body of controversies, and composed commentaries upon the *Psalms*, sermons, and several moral and devotional tracts. See Dupin's church hist. vol. IV. p. 273.

co-temporary du Perron *; the writings of a Shaftsbury †, a Bayle ‡, a Bolingbroke §, a Tindal ||, a Taylor |||, and numberless others, foreign and domestic, antient and modern, show to what wretched purposes parts and erudition both may be employed; and show, that, in proportion to such constitution of their talents, men trouble the church, and run the awful risk of bearing their punishment. — Which brings me to the

II. Thing in our method, To shew, namely, in what views, the excision of such office bearers may be wished and prayed for by Christians.

Under the Old Testament dispensation, excision was a penalty annexed to various crimes, and executed with such rigour, that the apostle counted the

* JAMES DAVI DU PERRON, a Frenchman, not inferior to Bellarmine for learning, greatly before him in eloquence. He was an apostate from the reformed religion, and became the more bigotted for popery. Henry IV. made him bishop of Evreux, and he was made cardinal in 1604. He wrote a large controversial treatise concerning the Eucharist, and several French poems. See Dupin's church hist. vol. IV. p. 273.

† ANTHONY Lord SHAFTSBURY, famous for the characteristics which go by his name.

‡ Monsieur BAYLE, author of a large historical Dictionary.

§ Lord BOLINGBROKE, author of letters on the state of history.

|| Mr. TINDAL, author of Christianity as old as the creation.

||| Dr. TAYLOR, of Norwich, author of a commentary upon the Romans, etc.

The last a Socinian; the other four most probably

the ceremonial law an unbearable yoke, Acts xv. 10. The famous Selden informs us, that the Jews reckoned up thirty-six different crimes, which were punished by excision. It is, notwithstanding, difficult, according to that great master of the Jewish learning, to say precisely what the punishment of excision among them was; for, though it is agreed, upon all hands, to be the cutting off of a person from his people; the Rabbins, says he, speak of three different kinds of excision, which were inflicted, according to the degrees of a person's guilt, or aggravations with which it was attended. One kind of excision affected the body only, and consisted of an untimely death; another, the soul only, and consisted of its utter extinction; and the third kind of excision, say these Rabbins, affected both soul and body, being a compound of the former two *. But it is easy to see, how little regard such rabbinical stuff merits, and how little dependance upon these opinions is to be had.

What Paul might here intend by excision, is neither certain to us; nor, perhaps, would his wish respecting the false teachers at Galatia, though never so well known, be a proper original for our imitation.---As an inspired person, or under prophetic influence, the apostle could say, "He that troubleth you *shall* bear his judgment, whosoever he be," Gal. v. 10. but did not say whether it would be temporal, or spiritual, or eternal: only, from the warmth of his zeal, as well as from his distinguished conformity to the will of God, he expressed, in the words of our text, his hearty approbation of the threatened judgment, and desire of its passing into the execution: he expressed, indeed, *that* approbation, and *this* desire, by a term no less familiar

* See dictionary of the Bible, on the word excision.

familiar to the Judaizing teachers, than frequent in the Old Testament scriptures,—but then the precise quality, extent, and duration of the judgment referred unto, is, by no means; condescended upon; and, therefore, we will not so much as pretend to guess at it.

The learned, amongst Christian commentators, view the punishment under consideration in different lights. Some of them, indeed, have been so ludicrous upon the subject, that their sentiments would hardly comport with the gravity which becomes this place *: what, however, amongst their opinions, seems most probable, will be taken notice of afterwards; and therefore, to prevent repetitions, shall now be passed over.

With regard to the original word †, we will only now observe, that, as cutting off is its proper signification, so the verb, to which it belongs, is always used, in the New Testament, to express the severing of one thing from another; or the dissolution of an union that previously took place. It is possibly a metaphor borrowed from the practice of amputating luxuriant branches from a tree, or mortified limbs from a body: thus we find the verb used once and again by the evangelist Mark, chap. ix. 43, 45. and again by the evangelist John, chap. xviii. 10.

Having paved our way, by these preliminary observations, it remains that we condescend on the particular views, in which the excision of unworthy office-bearers may be wished and prayed for by Christians.

1. Then, Christians may wish and pray for the

* Vide Poli Synopf. Critic. in locum. Also Whitby's paraphrase on this text.

† *Apocopsontai*.

excision of unholy men, who bear office in the church, from the corrupt stock, to which they naturally belong ; and, which is the fertile source of all their errors speculative and practical.—In other words, they may wish and pray for their conversion, from a sinful state and practice, to the life and exercise of new and holy obedience. Where men's being in the "gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity," is the cause of their troubling the church of God ; then, praying for their conversion, is a laying the "ax to the root of the tree ;" it is aiming a stroke at the cause ; and if *that* is thereby removed, the effects must necessarily subside.

It may, at first sight, wear an uncharitable aspect to suppose that office-bearers, in God's house, can be in an unholy state : but, when the Christian world is surveyed at large, in as far as men's state may be judged of from their principles and conversations, that supposition will be fully justified ; nay, the truth of the thing supposed will bear no dispute.—When the Christian world is surveyed at large !—why appeal to the records of uninspired churches, when the clearest evidence of the fact is transmitted to us in the sacred records ?—If men's being sons of Belial, and not knowing the Lord ; if deliberate profaneness respecting the divine worship, and monstrous acts of uncleanness persisted in, will instruct an unholy, unconverted state ; then were Eli's two sons evidently graceless, though employed in the priest's office, 1 Sam. ii. 12, 17, 22.—If covetousness, treachery, and suicide, meeting in one person, will prove the badness of his covenant state ; then, without all peradventure, Judas Iscariot, though one of our Lord's apostles, was an unconverted man, Matth. xxvi. 15, 49.—xxvii. 5.—And if cruelty, avarice and oppression, exercised against the members of Christ, are
sufficient

sufficient to destroy any scriptural pretensions to true holiness; then were Paul's successors at Ephesus, unregenerated and in their sins: for, the apostle called them "grievous wolves, not sparing *the flock*," Acts. xx. 29.

Wherever, therefore, it appears, from the fruit, that the tree is corrupt; it is certainly both lawful and laudable for Christians to pray, that—by being ingrafted into another,—a better stock,—the tree may be good; and to pray for this, as the best security, that the fruit shall likewise, in the qualities of it, be changed to the better.

However improbable, and hopeless-like the conversion of particular church officers may appear; wishing and praying for their excision, in this view, should be the exercise of Christians:—nor need they, altogether, in any, whatever, instance, despair of success, after the excision of our apostle himself from the wild olive. Instead of a blaspheming, a persecuting, and an injurious Saul; he became, upon his union with the true vine, a godly, a loving, and a charitable Paul. "Old things were done away, and all things made new."

2. Christians may wish and pray for the excision of unholy men, who are troublers of the church, from their particular offices, by deposition.—Who are troublers of the church, we said; because unconverted men may not trouble the church, in any of the respects condescended upon; nay, men of that character may be useful in the church of Christ; and are, therefore, Christians leaving them to stand or fall to their own masters, intitled to honour for their work's sake:—but where, as the fruits of their unregeneracy, they act in the manner represented under the last head, making the offices they bear an occasion of trial and disadvantage to those among whom they exercise them; deposition from these

these offices may certainly be the subject of wishes and prayers. In the civil world, it would be counted no great severity to deprive any one of a commission, which he employed to the dishonour of his constituent, or ruin of society; nor, in the military world, is the disarming of an enemy, within our power, reckoned cruel or unjust: the contrary is so much the truth, that duty would dictate the former; safety, the latter; and justice, both.—And shall the Christian society alone be obliged to suffer desolation, and go to wreck, through those who bear office in it?—Has the Head of his church left no laws, established no rules, suited to the preservation of his peoples rights,—the security of their privileges?—If he has, may not Christians, consistently with the meekness and gentleness of their character, humbly wish, and earnestly pray, that Christ's own laws may be carried into execution?—If for instance, a bishop must be, know, have, and do, according to the apostolic rule; 1 Tim. iii. 2 *etc.* will it not follow, by an undeniable consequence, that one, remarkable for any of the opposite blemishes, should be no bishop; or, if he is, that he should be deprived of his bishopric,—deposed from his office?—Would an external defect have been a sufficient ground of deposition under the law; and shall whole shoals of moral evils be insufficient to deprive men of their office under the gospel? Impossible!—And therefore, agreeable

* The apostle's characteristics are, 'Blameless—chaste—vigilant—sober—of good behaviour—given to hospitality not given to wine—no striker—not

The opposite blemishes are, 'to be blame-worthy—unclean—indolent intemperate—irregular—inhospitable—drunken—quarrelsome—worldly—greedy

to the New-Testament oeconomy, it can never be wrong in Christians to wish and pray for excision, in this view, against such troublers of the church; nor in Christ's faithful servants to use their influence and authority towards it. Regard to the Redeemer's honour; concern for the purity and enlargement of the church; zeal for the spiritual good of the rising generation and posterity; as well as the love they should have to the comfort of their own souls; will prompt holy persons to adopt the words of our text: nay, with propriety, we may likewise add, that compassion for the very persons who trouble the church, may, with Christians, be a motive for wishing they were cut off, in this view; because such excision would put it out of their power to sin,—to provoke Heaven,—and to treasure up higher degrees of wrath to themselves, by a criminal continuance in the breach of trust, as office-bearers in the church of Christ.

But, if the ends of edification, the security of Christian liberty, and other gospel privileges, can be no otherwise effected; we will venture to add, in the

3. Place, that it may be lawful for christians to wish and pray for the excision of such office-bearers from the church of Christ intirely, by excommunication. When we say from the church of Christ, we only mean, from his church on earth; as to the name, immunities, and privileges, peculiar to church

H 2 members;

greedy of filthy lucre—	hasty—imprudent—avaricious—
patient—not a brawler—	negligent—ignorant—and justly infamous,
not covetous—one that	
raileth well his own house	
—that is not a novice—	
and that has a good report of them which are	
without.	

members, which is perfectly consistent with a concern for their conversion, and eternal salvation; nay, consistent with a disposition to receive them again into the church here, upon their exhibiting proper evidences of that repentance which is not to be repented of.

With regard to the nature of excommunication, it seems to be a censure not peculiar to the churches, but common also to civil societies: hence it is competent for any such society to expel members who rebel against their constitution, or act unworthy of it; and to expel them, by banishment, for a shorter or longer time, with lesser or greater marks of infamy: nay, Selden quotes a passage from the manuscript of a Caraité *, affirming, "That excommunication was introduced into the Jewish republic, under the government of foreign princes †." As if that usage, in the Jewish church, had taken its rise from the practice of banishment in civil societies.

In the writings of the Jews themselves, so much is said of this punishment, and such various accounts of it are given, that the detail would be an endless, and, perhaps, useless, task. It amounts, in general, to this, that the person was expelled from the communion of that church; and from such external privileges too, as were connected with church communion §.

Besides

* A religious sect amongst the Jews, who reject rabbinical interpretations of scripture.

† See dictionary of the Bible, on the word *excommunication*.

§ The Jews, inflicted three different kinds of excommunication. The Greek and Latin churches, copying probably from the Jews, had likewise a three-fold

Besides the great severity with which this part of their discipline was attended, they carried the matter so far, as to render the censure itself ridiculous, in the eyes of other nations; for, the Rabbins contend, that excommunication had its effect even on the irrational tribes: and, what is no less surprising, it is alleged, that Roman catholics, in some instances, have copied after that usage amongst the Jews*.

What, however, must be chiefly to our purpose, is, the kind of this censure under the New-Testament dispensation. Our Lord, in his personal ministry, gives a very plain account of it, in these words, "Let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican," Matth. xviii. 17. *i. e.* You are not to hate him; rather, as a fellow-creature, to pray for him;—and though you cannot have complacency in him, you should exercise a Christian sympathy toward him, and concern for his salvation; In your church capacity only, he is to be considered in the same light as the heathen and the pagan world; considered as professed Christians are, who, by a profane conversation, give the lie to their profession; to be considered as no church member, as capable of no church privilege, and as one with whom you must hold no Christian communion.—The apostle of the Gentiles is still more explicit in transmitting to us the precise quality of this censure, when to the church at Corinth, he says, "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, such

H 4

" a

fold excommunication. Vide Godwin. Moses et Aaron, lib. v. cap. 2.

* The Baron de la Hontan, in his voyage to North America, informs us, that the bishop of Quebec excommunicated all the turtles in his diocese, for some misdemeanor alleged against them.

" a one must be delivered unto Satan †," 1 Cor. v. 4, 5.—Satan is called " the God of this world ;" 2 Cor. iv. 4. the heathen are the world, in opposition to the churches ; converts to Christianity come from the former to the latter : delivering, therefore, unto Satan in this sense, is no more than considering such a one to be, what he truly was before the commencement of his Christian profession, of the world, namely, or belonging to the world, in which, as a malignant prince Satan is permitted to bear a considerable sway. Accordingly, by wishing and praying for the excision under view, Christians only mean, that such rotten-hearted members be cut off from the body ecclesiastic ; and considered, in their true light, as unconverted and unholy : as of the world, lying in wickedness ; as fellow men, though by no means fellow Christians. Nor, on the supposition that the character and conduct of church officers are inconsistent with the spirit and practice of Christianity, would there be any injustice in this wish, or uncharitableness in that prayer ; because the Bible itself lays no foundation for our believing men to be saints, who think, and speak, and behave as sinners : nor can the wish and prayer, in such circumstances, be justly deemed cruel or inhuman, since their being cut off from the church, by men, is no bar in the way of God's dealing with them ; and can be none in the way of Christians praying for them. We come now to the

III. Thing proposed, To apply the subject in a suitableness to the occasion of this meeting.

The improvement shall consist in an address, 1.
To

† This is what the Jews called the second degree of excommunication. Vide Godwini Moses et Aaron lib. v. cap. ii. sect. 4.

To my reverend fathers and brethren of this presbytery, with such other church officers as now hear me. 2. To my reverend brother, at whose admission to the pastoral charge of this congregation I have the honour to preside. And, 3. To the constituent members of this congregation, and such other hearers of the gospel as witness this solemnity.

The first address, my reverend fathers and brethren, is what I could wish the nature of this discourse had not rendered some-how necessary. To put you in mind of your duty, does not become my age nor standing in the ministry: but, since it now lies upon me, by your own appointment, may I hope for your indulgence in the discharge of a trust, for which, to our common Lord and Master, you know I must be accountable?

If, then, it appears, that unholy men may bear office in the church of Christ, with what anxiety and diligence should we enquire into our own state and character; lest, peradventure, any of us may have failed of the grace of God; and be in danger of coming short of eternal life! Do we see cause to press this duty frequently upon our respective hearers; and shall it be thought altogether unnecessary with regard to ourselves?—If men, in general, need to make conscience of it, with a concern proportioned to the danger they are in of deceiving their own souls; how much more ministers,—lest what we do, in the ordinary course of our studies and labours, be mistaken for the life and exercise of grace, which are essential to the truly Christian and holy character?

If office-bearers in the Christian church may trouble her, by such such means as were mentioned, may not we, by the opposite principles and practices, form a tolerable notion of our own characters, as

the servants of God in the gospel of his Son? If love to the Redeemer, and the souls of men, be our chief inducement, in all our pastoral endeavours; if divine authority, interposed and exhibited by the scriptures, is our only standard in matters of doctrine; if the New Testament plan of Christian communion, church discipline also and government, disjoined from all the commandments of men, is what we desire and endeavour to be directed by, in our ruling capacity; and if a holy and unblameable conversation, a circumspect walk, an useful and a well-spent life, are the ambition of our souls; and, in some measure, enemies themselves being judges, our attainment through grace; then, it is evident that the charge laid by the apostle, against some teachers at Galatia, does not ly at our door.

If the edification and comfort of the churches have such a dependance on the character and deportment of those who bear office in them, how cautious should we be in licensing men to preach the gospel, or setting them apart to bear rule, with us, in our several congregations; and with what precision should we attend to the apostolic exhortation, to “lay hands suddenly on no man?” 1 Tim. v. 22. To want of faithfulness in these particulars, might not every mischief, of the kinds represented, be ascribed? If acquaintance with certain branches of literature, while no evidences of real Christianity appear, shall recommend one to a capacity of preaching the gospel;—if interest, in a particular corner, is that whereby another is *chiefly* preferred to the honour of ruling in a Christian congregation;—or, if the influence of the great and noble amongst men, without needful corresponding qualifications, can, of itself, raise a third to the pastoral charge of souls; in such circumstances, is it to be wondered that men of corrupt minds creep into the church of
Christ,

Christ, to the subversion, at once, of her quiet and prosperity?

In other churches, such evils often flow from a defect in their polity and constitution; but in the church to which we more immediately belong, there are such salutary rules, such fundamental laws, as must effectually guard against these inconveniencies: unless, by a criminal neglect, or partiality on our own part, those rulers are overlooked, and these laws dispensed with; wherefore, my reverend fathers and bretheren will give me leave to observe, that should we ever, in any instance, clothe men with the trusts mentioned, upon terms differing from the constitution of our church, terms short of it, or any how opposite to it; should we deliberately do so, a manifold breach of faith, plighted by our own ordination vows, would be added to all the other guilt, inseparable from such an illegal, though judicative, procedure.

Besides, as another consequence from what we have heard, will it not likewise follow, that in case such office-bearers, as were characterized, should ever appear in the church whereof we are members, our zeal and endeavours should be exercised in order to their reformation or excision? While church members can do no more than wish, or, at most, pray, for deliverance from such troublers; the spheres, wherein we move, put a vast deal more in our power, and greatly widen our capacity of usefulness in that respect: but should our superior advantages be neglected, or misused, when, for the relief of oppressed Christians, we may be called to employ them; to what an awful reckoning with the chief Shepherd, when he appears, must we thereby expose ourselves?

Might we suppose that any troubler or troublers of the Christian church were now within hearing.

they would be exhorted to break off their sins by repentance, and their iniquities by turning to the Lord ; with this dreadful certification, that if they did not, they should bear their punishment, whoever they were. They would, at the same time, be told, what an awful risk they ran, by having God's oppressed people crying day and night against them. If the prayers of a Knox were more terrible to an imperial princess, than thousands of armed men ; how terrible, to the troublers of the church of Christ, should be the prayers of thousands, and ten thousands of the excellent ones of the earth !— But, as it is not our business to make a supposition of this kind, the necessity of such an exhortation is altogether superseded.

Upon the whole, reverend and dear Sirs, let us, who bear office in this church, be concerned particularly for her prosperity ; concerned, that whatever mars edification and enlargement may be removed ; that whatever can contribute toward her tranquillity and welfare may take place ; that her priests may be clothed with salvation, her saints may be filled with joy, and that, in every respect, she may be “ fair as the sun, clear as the moon, and terrible “ as an army with banners.” Let us, in the discharge of our several trusts, disregard the smiles and frowns of the world ; remembering, that the first, as well as the last, are dangerous and ensnaring. Let us, in our personal, private, and public, characters, endeavour to act such a part, as the friends of Christ shall have no occasion to wish or pray for our excision ; or, if, through misinformation, or narrowness of soul, they should look upon us as troublers of the church ; let our conduct give the lie to that reproach, and secure the testimony of our consciences at the same time. In a word, let us “ take heed “ to ourselves, and to all the flock over which the
“ Holy

“ Holy Ghost hath made us overseers, to feed the
 “ church of God, which he hath purchased with
 “ his own blood,” Acts xx. 28.

2. This subject falls next to be improved in an address to the reverend brother who is now * admitted to the personal charge of this congregation.

It is happy, my reverend and dear brother, that none can, with truth, imagine I have any apprehension of your proving a troubler of the church of Christ ; nor, consequently, infer the least intention of a direct or an oblique thrust at your principles or character, by the discourse with which your admission was introduced : quite the reverse have my expectations been, since the commencement of our acquaintance ; nor have I the smallest reason to dread that your after conduct will render them abortive.

The obligations, Sir, under which you have this day laid yourself, are of such importance, as will fully justify the warmest exhortation to remember and fulfil them. Have you undertaken the pastoral charge of this congregation ? Have your time, your talents, your influence, and whole endeavours, been publicly, solemnly, dedicated to the service of these souls ? Then, you must not henceforth consider yourself as your own ; but, as you are a servant of Christ, so, as a servant to them for Christ's sake.—Your concern and ministerial endeavours must not be confined to one, or more, or most ; but, without exception, extended to the whole of this flock : for, whatever difference the providence of God may have made between one person, or family, and another ; their souls, you know, are equally precious, and claim, therefore, an equal attention from you.—As, by their capacities, circumstances,
 and

* This and the address to the people followed the admission.

and tempers, they may be no less distinguished, than they are by their features or complexions ; it is your business to understand such distinctions, that your pastoral labours may be particularly accommodated to them : for, it is evident, to every student of the scriptures, at least to every adept in the knowledge of human nature, that the same method and manner of dealing will not equally suit all the subjects of your ministry ; more than the same recipe or regimen could be supposed equally proper for all diseases and constitutions.—By an acquaintance, Sir, with the state of this flock, you will probably find, that some need to be dealt with as saints, and others as sinners ; that knowledge must be administered to one, and reproof to another ; that discipline is necessary *here*, and consolation *there* ; that *this* hearer reaps most advantage from the reasoning, and *that* from the declamatory, way :—you will find that either reservedness or familiarity will mar the ends of edification, if the choice of *these*, with whom the one or other is used, be not judiciously made ; that neither the forbidding nor engaging, the austere nor affable carriage must be promiscuously observed : and, in a word, Sir, you will certainly find the necessity of becoming, in the apostle's sense of the phrase, “all things to all men, that, by all means, you may save some,” 1 Cor. ix. 22.

With whatever unanimity, my dear brother, they have called you to labour amongst them, in the work of the gospel, you are by no means to expect that, in every measure, they will be unanimous with you. The contradiction of sinners, and sometimes of saints too, is what every servant of Jesus Christ may lay his account with ; and, therefore, you will forgive me in suggesting a caution against two extremes, to which opposition from our people may readily tempt.—Guard, on the one hand, against

against yielding to opposition, from whatever quarter, where your doing so would dishonour the Lord, and be a breach of that trust he hath committed to you : but, on the other, be no less aware, lest a weakness of mind, or stiffness of temper, to which the holiest on earth are liable, get the better, at any time, of reason, and insensibly block up the avenues through which proper conviction may be introduced : for, as it is certain, that gospel ministers ought much rather to suffer, than sin ; so, that an ingenuous yielding to the force of argument is more—much more virtuous and praise worthy, than a tenacious adherence to any measure or resolution, unsupported by scripture or reason.—In the course, Sir, of my own ministry, I have found manifold need of this caution ; and I persuade myself that all our fathers and brethren present will justify me in thinking your attention to it, and compliance with it, highly necessary.

You will not, I trust, look upon the ministry you have received of our Lord Jesus, as a by-work ; but consider it as claiming all the application and diligence you are capable of : if, in order to Timothy's exhorting and teaching, it was necessary that he gave attendance to reading ; if, that his profiting might appear to all, he behoved to stir up the gift that was in him, to meditate on divine things, and to give himself wholly to them ; and if, that he might save himself, and those who heard him, Timothy behoved to take heed unto himself, and unto his doctrine, and to continue in them : 1 Tim. iv. 13, *etc.* if, Sir, such diligence and application were incumbent upon Paul's own son in the faith, can it be thought unnecessary, even in an unworthy servant of Christ, to stir up, your pure mind by way of remembrance ?—What
you

you prepare for the public entertainment of this congregation, as it should not be above the reach of the most illiterate, so, it must not deserve the contempt of the most intelligent: both these extremes are so pernicious to the interests of Christianity, that it is impossible to say which should be avoided with the greatest care.

In your teaching capacity, every gospel doctrine claims its own room; and, therefore, with whatever zeal you may see cause to insist upon certain topics of Christianity, the rest should by no means be neglected. Some are blamed for dwelling on the credenda of religion; others, for confining themselves to the doctrine of works; but, would you be a workman that need not be ashamed, both must be regarded by you, and recommended, in their proper place, to this people.

As a ruler, Sir, in the church of Christ, and a co-presbyter with *these* reverend fathers and brethren, the duties formerly, though with all imaginable deference, recommended to them, are equally binding on you. With regard to your co-presbyters themselves, brotherly affection and obedience, in the Lord, become indispensable duties: without the former, gospel communion is interrupted; and, without the latter, church order is at an end. Though, in things of a disputable nature, you should, perhaps, be obliged to differ in your judgment from some of us; yet, in as far as we are agreed, cease not to walk in the love of the gospel; nor to pray, that, wherein you are other-ways minded, God may discover the mistake to them or you, upon whomsoever it is chargeable.

In a word, give me leave to add, how necessary it is, that you exhibit such a conversation before this people, as it shall be impossible for them to explode your doctrine, by contrasting it with your practice.

practice. Let the latter be a living commentary on the former; that the intemperate, being reformed by your sobriety; the unrighteous, by your integrity; and the ungodly, by your uniform devotion; may be led to glorify our common Lord and Master.

Having thus, dear Sir, pointed out some of the great lines of that work you have this day undertaken, we do call heaven and earth to witness, that your duty has been laid before you; and, that for all the consequences of despising or neglecting it, you alone shall be answerable. We, therefore, in the words of our apostle, "charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things, without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality," 1 Tim. v. 21. We proceed, in the

3. Place. To improve this subject in an address to the constituent members of this congregation. You, my brethren, in the kind providence of God, have acquired your unanimous wish, by the present admission of our worthy brother to labour amongst you, in the ministry of the gospel.—You are called,—you are bound thankfully to acknowledge *that* Lord, whose, we trust, he is, and whom he desires to serve, in the favourable dispensation.—Do your eyes now see your public teacher? and are your views of the stated means of salvation again revived? what praise is, thence, due to the gracious Head of the church, for such an interposition in your behalf; while numbers, through the Christian world, have no access to public ordinances at all; are scattered like sheep having no shepherd; or else, through the qualities of their public teachers, have no such agreeable prospects as you?—Remember that much of his usefulness, amongst
you

you, depends upon yourselves.—That he may help you, by his labours; you must help him, by your prayers. As the zeal and faithfulness of gospel ministers bid fair to have an agreeable effect on their flocks; so, it seldom fails, that the frequent and fervent prayers of a people have a delightful effect on their pastors.—He is no more than an earthen vessel, into which the treasure must be put by the master of assemblies; else things new and old can never, by him, be brought forth, to your edification and comfort.—You are bound to make conscience of attending his ministrations; for, though you should pray for him, and he use every mean of usefulness to your souls, if these means are not attended, what profit to you, or comfort to him, can take place? Nor think it enough, without necessity at least, to wait upon particular means of instruction, to the neglect of others; for, as the wind bloweth where it listeth, and as the husbandman knoweth not whether his morning or evening labours shall prosper; the very mean you neglect, may be *that*, whereby your spiritual interests might have been promoted: besides, if infinite wisdom has seen meet that line should be upon line, and precept upon precept, by lightly esteeming any part of that provision, you will pour manifest contempt, not on your pastor only, but on him also who sent him. Moreover, my brethren, you must know, that his undertaking to spend and be spent for you, necessarily implies a reciprocal engagement, on your part, to attend upon his pastoral endeavours, and improve them to the best advantage.

Submission to him, in the Lord, is no less your indispensable duty.—Would the representative of some great personage meet with deference and regard, for his constituent's sake? and shall not one, employed, by Jesus Christ, to take the oversight of
your

your souls, and carry his laws into execution amongst you, be received and obeyed for his master's sake?—Though, in discharging this great trust, your pastor should be obliged to exercise the sword of discipline; or, where the circumstances of the case may require, to use particular freedoms with your consciences; his kindness toward you, and concern for your salvation, are no more to be, from thence, called in question, than are the integrity and compassion of a physician, for applying medicines, where lenitives can take no effect.

In a word, as he will endeavour to be a comfort to you; with equal concern, should you endeavour to render yourselves comforts to him. If it must be acknowledged upon our part, that church members may, occasionally, be troubled by the weaknesses or temptations, even of worthy and useful office-bearers; can my dear friends be angry, though we take the liberty of telling you, that the tempers and temptations, the wickedness, sometimes, as well as weakness, of particular persons, in most congregations, are troublesome and vexatious to the office-bearers in them? Care, therefore, must be taken to guard against whatever may tend to weaken the hands, or discourage the heart of your minister: if yielding, on his part, for your edification, becomes his duty; compliance, on your part, for his comfort, will be no less incumbent.

We conclude with a short address to such hearers of the gospel, as, with this congregation, have witnessed the present solemnity.

In as far as, my dear friends; you are blest with such to minister among you, and to bear rule over you, as are not troublers of the church, but spiritual guides, ensamples and comforts; in so far God deals with you as he has not dealt with every people:

ple: wherefore, your gratitude to him, and improvement of such mercies, should bear some kind of proportion to the favours by which you are so happily distinguished. As an inducement to these exercises, allow yourselves to reflect on many Christians, in foreign parts, as well as in our neighbouring church, whose circumstances, respecting their spiritual teachers and rulers, are so different from yours.

It has, with justice, been allowed, by strangers themselves, that, all things considered, no *just* body of professors, through the whole Christian world, are so much privileged as those in our own church. We pretend not to say, that our church is faultless, or her office-bearers unblameable; and though we should say it, you would ly under no obligation to believe us: but we may venture to affirm, that the particulars, wherein church officers may sometimes be obliged to differ from you, must not always be considered as characteristical of troublers of the church; nor, therefore, as grounds upon which you may lawfully wish and pray for their excision: for, might Christians warrantably proceed upon such flimsy pretences, the real servants of Christ would soon drink deeper in the cup of sufferings, through the mistaken zeal of their hearers, than the hearers can probably ever do, through the zeal or imaginary mismanagement of their rulers. As long, my brethren, as pastors and people both are in a state of immaturity, their views and judgments cannot, in all things, be supposed to coincide; which is a maxim so evident, on the principles of reason and revelation, that the necessity of forbearance,—nay, of manifold allowances, on each hand, is as demonstrable, as any thing of the kind is capable of.—If you imagine that office-bearers, in the church of Christ, are any more than
men.

men of like passions with ourselves ; you will be as grossly mistaken, as we would be, did we expect that even holy persons amongst you, should know and act, as the angels in heaven.—Are we often obliged, in judging of your characters, to admit, that the gold may be real, though mingled with much dross ? and have we not a claim, upon you, for the same candour in judging of ours ?

By all this we mean not to insinuate, that troubles of the church may not sometimes be found, in one or another corner amongst ourselves ; nor that, if they are such, in the scripture views of the character, you may not wish and pray for their excision : we only intend to caution you against forming your judgments of ministers and elders, upon the opinions of others, especially, if of a different communion from them ; upon the prejudice of education ; upon such sentiments of your own minds, as may only be raw and indigested ; or upon any other rule of judging, whatever, than the written, the unerring, word of God. If that standard was judiciously applied, to every individual, we doubt not, that, in some instances, your former apprehensions might be found just ; at the same time, it is a thousand to one, but some likewise, most dandled on the popular knee, and thereby least exposed to the lash of your censures, might be found greatly, perhaps grossly, wanting. For, hath not he, who spake as never man did, assured us, that “ many who are first shall be last, and the last first ?” Matth. xix. 30.

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S E R M O N IV.

T H E
C O N V E R S I O N
O F T H E
G E N T I L E S
I L L U S T R A T E D *.

MATTHE. viii. 11.

I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of Heaven.

NOTHING can be more encouraging to Christians, in the performance of duty, than God's promise of success; and, as no part of holy obedience is more interesting than humble endeavours toward the propagation of the gospel, no duties have greater variety of engaging promises annexed to them.

If

* This sermon was preached before the society in Scotland, for propagating Christian knowledge, at their anniversary meeting, in the High Church of Edinburgh, on Friday, June 6th, 1766.

If the design of our meeting be to recommend such generous endeavours, as well as to pray for a blessing upon them, the propriety of essaying to illustrate this passage, will bear no dispute.

Our Lord, who improved every occurrence in providence for the instruction of mankind, took an opportunity, from the faith of a Roman officer, to inform the world, what vast designs of grace his heavenly Father had in reserve toward Gentile sinners; and these cheering and charming news he hath transmitted to us in the words of our text.

If the words are a prophecy, in delivering it, our Lord acted as the great Prophet of his church: but if a promise, in making it, he acted as God our Saviour, though dwelling in flesh; than either of which views, nothing can be more expressive of the obligations we are under, by a believing dependence, to give him the glory of his faithfulness. Doth the Prince of the kings of the earth speak? and shall we not hear! Doth wisdom lift up her voice? And shall we not regard!

What we propose, through divine aid, is,

“To illustrate the designs of Grace upon Gentile sinners, expressed in this passage, with a view to animate your endeavours toward the propagation of Christian knowledge among them.”

Though God hath secured the end by immutable promises, duty on our part is not the less incumbent. Though he “will have all men to be saved,” means of bringing them “to the knowledge of the truth,” 1 Tim. ii. 4. are nevertheless to be used. And though saving conversion is effected exclusively by himself, we are, in a way of duty, to be “workers together with him,” 2 Cor. vi. 1.

That God had designs of grace upon Gentile sinners

sinners, while they made no part of his church, and were not called by his name, appears from their being brought, once and again, into the line which terminated in the Messiah, and thereby becoming such necessary links in the genealogical chain from Abraham to Christ, that without them, the connection would have been broken, the chain incomplete. Accordingly, we find Tamar a Syrian, Matth. i. 3. Rachab a Canaanite, Matth. i. 5. and Ruth a Moabite, Matth. i. 5. all Gentiles, to whom originally pertained neither the adoption nor the glory, numbered among the ancestors of Joseph*.

The designs of Grace under consideration are still more evident from many express attestations of scripture. "I will give thee (said the Father to his Anointed) the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession," Psal. ii. 8. "The abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee; the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee," Is. lx. 5. And, "From the rising of the sun, even unto the going down of the same, my name (saith the Lord) shall be great among the Gentiles," Mal. i. 11. When, therefore, the time was fulfilled, Paul said to the Jews at Rome, "The salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and they will hear it," Acts xxviii. 28.

The commission which our Lord first gave to his apostles contained, indeed, a clause which seemed unfavourable for the nations: "Go not (said he) into the way of the Gentiles; and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not," Matth. x. 5. But

* These Gentiles are no less among the ancestors of Mary; for, from Abraham to David, the line is the same as to both.

But then, as the head of apostolic authority, he took such steps in the exercise of his personal ministry, as plainly shewed, that both Gentiles and Samaritans were eventually to partake of the common salvation. As to the Gentiles, we are informed, by one Evangelist, that Jesus shewed judgment unto them, and caused them to trust in his name, *Matth. xii. 18, 21.* of which the conversion of the Syrophoenician woman was a striking instance, *Matth. xv. 21, &c.* And, with respect to the Samaritans, another Evangelist hath assured us, that by the interposition of Immanuel's grace, many of them were speedily, but savingly, converted: "He told me (said one) all things that ever I did:" and, "We believe, (said numbers) for we have heard him ourselves," *John iv. 29, 42.*

Nor is this only the doctrine of scripture in general, but, undoubtedly, the meaning of this passage in particular. The faith, you see, of a Gentile gave rise to the declaration before us: "I have not" (said our blessed Lord) found so great faith, no, "not in Israel," *Matth. viii. 10.* And the Jews are called "the children of the kingdom," *Matth. viii. 12.* to distinguish them from the people who should "come from the east and the west;" and, as it is in the parallel passage, "from the north and south," *Luke xiii. 29.*

This very circumstance of their coming from the four cardinal points, is a corroborative evidence, that Gentile sinners are particularly intended. Let the redeemed of the Lord, says the prophet, celebrate his mercy, who "gathered them out of the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south;" *Psal. cvii. 3.* plainly intimating, that sinners, not only in Judea, where the posterity of Jacob then chiefly resided,

but in all parts of the world, should be the subjects of converting grace.

If they are to come from all quarters, our Lord's words intimate designs of grace upon Gentile sinners *near* Capernaum, where he had this interview with the centurion; which began to appear, not long after, in the conversion of Cornelius, and his friends at Cæsarea to the Christian faith, Acts x.

They intimate designs of Grace upon Gentile sinners whose residence was *far from* Galilee; for God hath said, "I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back; bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth, *Is.* xliii. 5, 6. Accordingly, having established a connection between the mean and the end, he made provision that the former should be sent where ever the latter was to be effected, saying to the Apostles, "Go ye into *all* the world, and preach the gospel to every creature;" Mark xvi. 15. and afterwards to Paul, "Depart, for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles," Acts xxii. 21.

They intimate designs of Grace upon Gentile sinners inhabiting *continental countries*. These, as distinguished from the other parts of this globe, where probably in his eye, who said, The Lord "hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all nations, and *all the ends of the earth* shall see the salvation of our God," *Is.* lii. 10

And they intimate designs of Grace upon Gentile sinners who inhabit the *isles* in the sea. "My righteousness is near, (saith the Lord) my salvation is gone forth, and mine arm shall judge the people; the isles shall wait upon me, and on mine arm shall they trust," *Is.* li. 5. And again it is promised, that "men shall worship the Lord,

Lord, "every one from his place; even all the " isles of the heathen," Zeph. ii. 11. among which the happy isles where our lot is cast was doubtless numbered.

But if Gentile sinners are to be gathered from " the east and west, the north and south," our Lord's words are expressive of gracious designs upon them, as distinguished by whatever *outward circumstances*. As distinguished, for instance, by nation and language; for he who cannot lie hath said, "I will gather all nations and tongues, " and they shall come and see my glory," Is. lxvi. 18. As distinguished by features and complexion; for in the prophetic words of David, we are assured, that " Ethiopia shall soon stretch " out her hands to God," Psal. lxxviii. 31. pointing, doubtless, at the numerous, the numberless, swarthy tribes, which inhabit different countries through Africa, Asia, and America. And distinguished by their rank and station in the world. With respect to the inferior tribes of men, it is promised, not only that " the deaf shall hear the " words of the book, and the eyes of the blind " see out of obscurity and out of darkness;" but that " the meek also shall increase their joy in " the Lord, and the poor among men rejoice in " the holy ONE of Israel," Is. xxix. 19. And with regard to those in higher life, " Kings themselves (says the Father to his Son, or church) " shall come to the brightness of thy rising," Is. lx. 3. Though *not many*, according to Paul, yet, from this prediction, it appears, that *some* wise men after the flesh, *some* mighty, and *some* noble should be called, 1 Cor. i. 26.

Moreover, If Gentile sinners are to be gathered from the four winds, our Lord's words are an intimation, that some who were most unlikely, who

laboured under the great st disadvantages, and were loaded with the most enormous crimes, should eventually be the subjects of redeeming grace. Accordingly, of the converts at Corinth, we are told, that some were "fornicators idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, abusers of themselves with mankind, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, and extortioners," 1 Cor. vi. 9, &c. And of the Gentile converts at Ephesus, that they "were dead in trespasses and sins; that they walked in them according to the course of this world; and that they were without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world," Eph. ii. 1, &c.

As our Lord, in this passage, evidently speaks of gracious designs upon the Gentiles, so he assures us, that not one, or a few, but *many* such should reap the benefit of them. They may not be many from each of the quarters we have mentioned; they may not be many in particular kingdoms or generations; they may not be many in our day, at least, according to our apprehension; and they will not be many when compared with the unholy tribes with whom they are mingled in their several generations: But, when gathered into one, when fully assembled in the realms of bliss, they shall make a most respectable appearance, shall swell to an innumerable concourse. Besides the hundred forty and four thousand which were sealed, the apostle "beheld a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations and kindreds, and people, and tongues," standing "before the throne of God, and before the Lamb," Rev vii. 9.

The argument, however, for "stimulating your endeavours toward the propagation of Christian knowledge among the Gentiles," will appear in a
 still

still stronger light, when the richness of the blessing here promised is duly attended unto. "Many shall come (said the incomparable Preacher) from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven."

If, in ordinary cases, our zeal for the interest of others be greater or lesser, according to the importance of the end which we propose to accomplish by the exercise of it, in the present case, it behoved, upon that principle, to rise to the highest pitch.

If converting our fellow-men from Heathenism to Christianity, in general, or to any one distinguishing mode of religion, in particular, was all that our Lord's words encouraged us to aspire after, the argument would be greatly weakened; because such conversions may be frequent where regeneration is not known: But conversion, in its largest sense, as comprehending a gracious, a scriptural, and saving change, being the privilege wrapped up in the bosom of this text, no zeal can be too keen, no ambition too high, no endeavours too great, in order to the accomplishment of it.

With respect to their *coming* from all quarters, we beg your attention to this general observation, That God having connected the mean and the end inseparably together, if the means of conversion are not sent where the sinners comprehended in this promise reside, they shall be brought where the kingdom of God is known.

Nothing to this purpose can be imagined more remarkable, than the repair of sinners out of all nations to Jerusalem, when the time to favour Zion, by the effusion of the holy Ghost, was fully come, Acts ii. 5. Had those people (whether they were Jews or Gentiles) remained in their native countries, the knowledge of salvation would not then have reached them; but, because they were to be

converted at Jerusalem, on the day of Pentecost, they were previously brought, in the providence of God, to that happy place.

The Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and others, came, from their respective countries, to dwell at Jerusalem, from secular, possibly, as well as religious views;—but God brought them, that he might fulfil, in thousands, Acts ii. 41. at once, the good pleasure of his goodness *. If they, for instance, had the prosecution of trade in their eye, God had the more noble purpose in his, of putting the “pearl of great price” into their possession: If they came to amass earthly riches, he brought them, that “durable riches and righteousness” might be enjoyed by them; and, if they came for the benefit of dwelling at the metropolis of Judea, God brought them, that they might become “fellow-citizens with the saints,” and belong to “the household of faith.”

But though such Gentile sinners as are comprehended in this promise, reside where the light of the gospel shines,—if their conversion is to be effected by other means than what they have access to,—without design in them, they shall be removed to the very place where that mean shall be enjoyed, and crowned with success.

The story of Onesimus, we take to be a striking instance of this.—In the family of Philemon, he had near access to the means of grace: But the God of salvation, intending to convert him by the ministry of another, permitted that unworthy

* This piece of history is not quoted as an instance of God’s bringing Gentile sinners to the means of conversion, because most, if not all of these might be Jews or proselytes; only as a general example of the wisdom of providence in making the places of men’s abode subservient to their conversion.

thy slave to leave Philemon's service, and retire to Rome, where Paul, while in bonds, was the instrument of bringing him to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Onesimus, having made this elopement, went to Rome, that he might be freed from a temporary servitude ; but, God brought him there, that he might set him free from the worse than Egyptian slavery of sin. He went thither in quest of licentious liberty ; but, God brought him, that he might endow him with the glorious liberty of his own children. The wretch went to Rome, that his perfidious character, as a purloiner of his master's goods, might be concealed ; but, God brought him, that he might awaken his guilty conscience, and reduce him to the blessed necessity of condemning himself. And while Onesimus retired to Rome, that he might evade Philemon's search, and escape the punishment due to his crimes,—O, how rich the grace ! God brought him, that he might deliver him from the wrath to come, and recommend him, as a fellow-Christian, to his injured master for ever.

If, therefore, sinners take up their residence, with a view to nothing higher than conveniences and advantages of an outward nature, and their conversion take place by means which they could not otherwise have had access to :—If they attend a particular ordinance with no nobler view than to amuse themselves, gratify curiosity, meet with an acquaintance, set a tryst, transact business, acquire a name, or, possibly, to appear in their best cloaths ;—and God be pleased to make that very ordinance effectual to their salvation :—Or, though they repair to ordinances with the pitiful view of scoffing at the preacher, making merry with the performance, or turning the seriousness of others in-

to : *Gentile*;—and God apprehend them by his grace.—In all such instances, their coming is a proof in favour of our Lord's promise in the text, though a fulfilment of it which the event alone can illustrate.

Having made this general observation,—“ that “ you may be the more induced to use the means “ of propagating Christian knowledge,” we shall endeavour, more explicitly, to illustrate the import of their coming “ from the east and the west,” as a blessing here promised, with respect to Gentile sinners:—In as far as connected with their sitting “ down in the kingdom of heaven,”—it seems to comprehend—their coming *to themselves*,—*to Christ*,—*to the communion of the church on earth*,—and, in due time, *to the triumphant church in heaven*, where the patriarchs and all the prophets have, long ago, sat down.

Under the influence of this promise, Gentile sinners shall come *to themselves*. Before the day-spring from on high arise, they are generally so lost in brutal ignorance, that it has been found necessary, for the servants of God in the gospel of his dear Son,—first to make *men*, before they could attempt to make *Christians*, of them *. And with respect to the concerns of eternity, the unconverted

part

* The following extract from Mather's life of Mr. John Elliot pastor of the church at Roxburgh in N. England, justifies this observation.—“ He had,” says Mr. Mather, “ a double work incumbent on him ;—“ he was to make men of them, ere he could hope “ to see them fairs; they must be civilized, ere they “ could be Christianized.—To think on raising a number of these hideous creatures unto the elevation “ of our holy religion, must argue more than common “ sentiments in the undertaker.”—This happened anno 1646.

part of mankind, without exception, are no less beside themselves, than those deprived of reason, in the common affairs of life. As mad people may imagine that their circumstances are opulent and gay, while they are clothed in rags, meagre through fasting, or galled with fetters;—unregenerated persons may make a very false estimate of their situation, and dream of a state from which they are greatly removed. They may think, that they “are rich, and increased with goods, and have “need of nothing;” while,—how melancholy, how fatal the delusion! they “know not that they are “poor, and miserable, and wretched, and blind, “and naked,” Rev. iii. 17. Under this promised influence, however, as the supposed prodigal in the parable, upon *coming to himself*, saw that he starved, while his father’s servants had abundance, Luke xv. 17. Gentile sinners shall make many interesting discoveries. They shall see their natural depravity, their actual provocation, their unspeakable loss, their imminent danger; and, upon all these accounts, they shall feel heart-bitterness, and groan under it.

Having come to themselves, they shall likewise *come to Christ*. Conviction without conversion, would be no privilege; and, therefore, the latter, as well as the former, is secured to the Gentiles by this promise. Though never so sensible of their guilty and perishing state, “the God of this world” may continue to blind their minds, and “the light “of the glorious gospel” may not “shine unto “them:” 2 Cor. iv. 4. but God, mindful of his grace and truth, shall shine in their hearts, and give them “the light of the knowledge of his glory, “in the face of Jesus Christ,” 2 Cor. iv. 6.

In this light, they shall clearly see,—that there is life in Christ for them; that they may be saved,

without prejudice to the sacred honours of law and justice ; that, as sinners, independent of every thing else, the word of salvation is addressed to them ; that grace for determining and enabling them to believe, is a part of the offered salvation ; and, that believing is not only *the mean*, but *one special evidence* of mens interest in the gospel Saviour.

Such views shall influence their wills—*so effectually*, as to make the divine interposition quite evident ; but *so sweetly*, that their compliance shall be as properly their own act, as if no power from on high were exerted for that purpose at all.

Thus illuminated and constrained, there is no part of the record, concerning Christ, but what they believe ; no part of his salvation, but what they pant after ; no duty in the Christian life, but what they approve of ; no trial in the Christian lot, but what they are reconciled to ;—nor any thing in the whole plan of grace, but what appears in such a light,—so ordered and sure, that, without exception, it is all their salvation, and all their desire.

Besides coming to themselves, and to Christ, Gentile sinners shall, under the influence of promised grace, *come to a vital communion with the church of God upon earth*.—It is not our present business to enumerate the various denominations by which different churches are distinguished ; nor to determine which of those many distinctions are most characteristical of the *truly* New Testament church :—Perhaps, in the greater part, something excellent might be found ;—and by collecting together the several excellencies, for which various denominations of churches are most remarkable,—for aught we know, something nearest to the New Testament pattern might be produced. But, as this is not to be expected,—churches with defects

and

and blemishes may, upon the whole, be allowed to bear the name; and, therefore, in capital articles, Gentile converts may hold communion with one or other of them.

Without such allowance, there could be no church-communion at all; for, with whatever precision the choice is made, Will any one, who thinks for himself, venture to affirm, that, among the Christians with whom he is denominated, there is nothing exploded, which he would not cheerfully adopt; nor adopted, which he would not have all freedom to explode? Sooner may we expect to see a whole nation of the same stature and complexion, than to find a whole church, upon earth, viewing doctrine and worship, discipline and government, *precisely* in the same point of light.

What, therefore, we intend by the church of Christ, with whom true converts will readily,—must necessarily, hold communion, is the body of real saints, where-ever they are scattered, however they are denominated, and by whatever unessential modes in religion they are distinguished from one another.

With such persons Gentile sinners will have *one hope*, Eph. iv. 4, 7. or inheritance in view;—*one Lord*, by a joint acknowledgement of Christ's divinity, by calling him Lord and Master, doing the things which he hath commanded, and availing as much from his kingly as from his prophetic or priestly office;—*one faith*, or system of Christian doctrines, to contend earnestly for; Jude 3.—*one baptism*,—agreeing as to the author and ends, however they may differ as to the manner, or proper subjects, of that ordinance; and, by the Spirit of Christ dwelling in them, they shall claim interest in *one God*, and glory in him as their Father, Gal. iv. 6.

Having thus been “made to drink into one spi-

"rit," they shall have fellowship together, not only in love to God for what he is, and hath done, but in fervent love toward all his children, and hearty concern that sinners, by genuine conversion, may speedily be numbered with them.

Gentile sinners, under the influence of this promise, shall *come to heaven* itself. They shall come, by a scriptural perseverance in the gracious state, temper, and practice condescended upon, until their connections with mortality be loosed.—That they *should* persevere, appears from the exhortation to be "steadfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord," 1 Cor. xv. 58.—That they *may* persevere, is evident from the example of those who drew not "back to perdition," but believed "to the saving of the soul," Heb. x. 39.—That they *must* persevere, or come short of eternal life, cannot be disputed, "if he," only, "that endureth to the end, shall be saved," Matth. x. 22.—Nay, that they *shall* persevere, is put beyond doubt by the promise in our text; provision being made for their accession to the kingdom, every intermediate pre-requisite must necessarily be included.

They shall come by progress and advancement. The life of grace is progressive in its own nature;—those who are animated with it sit not still, as if they "had attained, or were already perfect;" Philip. iii. 12.—they advance really, though they should not always be sensible of it, toward "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," Eph. iv. 13. *in which* their conviction, conversion, and Christian fellowship, shall finally issue.—The propriety of aspiring after such holy progress, is ascertained by the exhortation to "grow in grace," 2 Pet. iii. 18.—The *possibility* of it is fully vouched by the experience of Paul and the believing Ro-

mans,

mans, whose "salvation," at every after period, was proportionally "nearer than when" they first "believed," Rom. xiii. 11.—And the *certainty* of it manifestly declared in the words of grace under consideration;—where a term expressive of progress, is emphatically made use of;—they shall *come* *, *i. e.* from one stage to another, until they arrive at the kingdom.

They shall come, not only by perseverance and progress in the paths of righteousness, but by the translation of their pardoned, ransomed souls, at the hour of death, into the palaces of salvation. They will be escorted "by angels, into Abraham's bosom;" Luke xvi. 22.—"an entrance shall be ministered unto" them "abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ:" 2 Pet. i. 11.—And the *very* "day" that the taper of life is extinguished, their souls shall be with him "in paradise," Luke xxiii. 43.

In a word, they shall come, by the translation of their bodies, also, at the resurrection of the just.—All, -all, without exception, who, in this life, have come to themselves, to Christ, and to a vital communion with his ransomed church; all who have persevered and advanced in these steps until death; and, all whose souls reached the kingdom, upon the dissolution of their clay-tabernacles;—all such,—soul and body both, shall come to the kingdom of heaven, as soon as the business of the resurrection, and grand affair of judgment are intirely over.—In the spirited language of prophecy, "The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion, with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall fly away," *Is.* xxxv. 10. And in the words of our apostle, "They

* *Esuf.*

"They who sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him; the dead in Christ shall rise first; and so shall they ever be with the Lord," 1 Theff. iv. 14, 16, 17.

Besides the designs of grace which God has upon the Gentiles, and the leading blessings wherewith they are pregnant to the heirs of promise,—from the first dawn of conversion, to the full meridian of glory,—there is still another part of the argument to be illustrated, which is equally calculated "to rouse your ambition, and invigorate your endeavours toward the propagation of Christi-an knowlege," namely, "the qualites of that happiness to which the subjects of this grace shall be raised," emphatically expressed by *sitting down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and*, according to the parallel passage, *all the prophets, in the kingdom of heaven, or of God*, as the other evangelist expresseth it, Luke. xiii. 28.

What! A kingdom?—*The kingdom?*—*The kingdom of heaven?*—*The kingdom of God?*—Are not *these*—terms emphatical beyond the powers of language to express,—of the more eloquent pencil to describe,—or the still more fertile imagination to conceive?

If the glory reserved for Gentile sinners be a *kingdom*,—they will not only be intrusted with the services, and interested in the privileges of it; but,—how amazing the thought!—how transporting the view!—they, as heirs, shall be put in possession of the kingdom itself, and presented with all the ensigns of royalty, as—not only *priests*, but *kings unto God*.

Their right to the kingdom is recorded by inspired writers with the utmost precision.—"I appoint unto you a kingdom, (said the Heir of all things,) as my Father hath appointed unto me,"

Luke

Luke xxii. 29. and "if children, (said the apostle "to Gentile converts) then heirs, and joint heirs "with Christ," Rom. viii. 17. With respect to the regalia, which shall be presented to them on the threshold of glory, the sacred writings are no less explicit.—They tell us of a crown prepared, 2 Tim. iv. 8. a throne erected, Matth. xix. 28. a robe of state finished, Rev. vi. 11. of royal apartments fitted up, John xiv. 2. of ministers in waiting; Heb. i. 14. and what can we say more?

In our Lord's description of future bliss, it is not only called a kingdom, but, to point out the peculiar excellency of it,—*the kingdom*. Kingdoms, upon earth, deserve not the name; and the regal office is meanness itself, compared with this.—It is *the kingdom*,—*in* which all that can be enjoyed is comprehended,—*to* which no acquisition can be made,—*from* which nothing can be taken by fraud or force,—*upon* which no revolution can pass:—And *the kingdom*, because the enjoyment and administration of it will be attended with no fatigue or anxiety, no distress or danger, for ever.

The blessedness in reserve for Gentile sinners, is farther distinguished by our Lord's calling it "the kingdom of *heaven*;" the "third heavens," to which Paul was "caught up," 2 Cor. xii. 2, 4. the "paradise" of God, Luke xxiii. 43. to which the penitent thief was translated; "the sanctuary and true tabernacle," Heb. viii. 1, 2. into which Christ hath entered,—"where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal," Matth. vi. 20.—shall be the seat of their happiness, the theatre of their triumph.

The glory under view will be altogether pure and spiritual, that it may suit the taste and capacities of such holy ones. This seems to be chiefly intended by giving their kingdom the epithet of heavenly :

heavenly ;—a heavenly country, Heb. xi. 16. and heavenly places, Eph. i. 20. divested of all that is gross and perishing, enriched with all that is divine and incorruptible. According to this view, God himself, as an expression of his essential holiness, is frequently called, heavenly *Father*, Matth. xv. 13. Luke xi. 13. The angels of light, to distinguish them from the powers of darkness, are called the heavenly *host*, Luke ii. 13. The Lord Jesus, to point out his pre-eminence, compared with the first Adam, is called the heavenly *man*; 1 Cor. xv. 49. and the gracious change, which makes the difference between saints and sinners, is denominated their heavenly *calling*, Heb. iii. 1.

Agreeable, however, to the parallel passage, the glory promised to Gentile converts, is the kingdom of God, Luke xiii. 28. It bears that denomination with undoubted propriety, as the heirs “were chosen,” Eph. i. 4. and the “kingdom prepared,” by him “before the foundation of the world;” Matth. xxv. 34.—as they are kept by his almighty power, through faith unto *this* salvation; 1 Pet. i. 5.—as he, having the whole administration delivered up to him by the Mediator, 1 Cor. xv. 24. will be the everlasting guarantee of their happiness; and as, in the inimitable language of scripture, “Every good gift, and every perfect,” the crowning gift of *heaven* by no means excepted, “cometh from the Father of lights,” Jam. i. 17.

But the view of future glory, which *this* epithet exhibits to us, will rise, and greatly swell, in our eye, if it is added, that God *himself* will be the sum and substance, the “all in all” of their inheritance. The apostle of the Gentiles, who learned his divinity immediately at the feet of Christ, is very bold, when he saith, that the children of grace are heirs—of what!—of pardon?—holiness?—happiness?

—happiness?—not only so, but,—astonishing! “heirs of God;” Rom. viii. 17. of all that he *best*; nay, of all that he *is*.

How vast, then,—how immensely vast and unmeasurable the territories of this kingdom! How infinite the extent of this promised, this purchased, inheritance!—What Paul, quoting from the prophet, said of New Testament privileges in general, will eminently hold of this consummate blessing, “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him,” 1 Cor. ii. 9.

That the “argument for endeavouring to propagate Christian knowledge among the Gentiles,” may be the more interesting, this passage not only informs us, that there is such a state as “the kingdom of heaven,” but assures us, that Gentile sinners, from “the east and west,” *shall sit down there*. As the word used by our Lord * properly signifies, a *lying down on sofas or couches*, which was, and, according to modern accounts, continues to be the usual posture at banquets, and even ordinary meals, among the eastern nations;—we apprehend, that *this* is expressive of the holy ease and rest which true converts shall enjoy in Emmanuel’s land.

They shall, accordingly, “rest from their labours,” Rev. xiv. 3. from all that pained and toiled their bodies,—tried and distracted their minds; from all sin in heart and life, and from all sufferings of an outward or inward, a personal or relational nature.

Nor is this rest *merely* expressive of negative, but *chiefly* of positive happiness. “It is a righteous thing with God (said the apostle to the believing Thessalonians) to recompence tribulation

“ to

* *Anacithesfontai.*

"to them that trouble you; and to you, who are troubled, *rest* with us," 2 Thess. i. 6, 7.—Where, you cannot but see that *rest* is the antithesis to *tribulation*; consequently, *that* must no less include positive happiness, than *this* does positive misery.

As one branch of positive salvation, their *sitting*, or *lying* down, conveys the cheering and delightful idea of being at home. While on earth, the heirs of glory are pilgrims, strangers, sojourners, and way-faring men, *i. e.* they are not at home, are not in a reclining and resting, but in a moving and striving posture: Whereas, in the kingdom of God, they will be where all their present desires and endeavours tend;—at the point wherein all their ambition terminates; nay, beyond which it does not, would not, cannot possibly go. There they shall find "the work of righteousness" to have been "peace, and the effect of righteousness, "quietness and assurance for ever."—There they "shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure "dwelling, and in quiet resting-places," Is. xxxii. 17, 18.

Their *sitting down* in the kingdom of heaven, according to the spirited import of this phrase, is particularly expressive of the repast or entertainment to which they will there be admitted. There shall be a table covered for all the heirs of promise, at which they will be perpetually regaled with the richest produce of Emmanuel's land.

One end our Lord has in view, by the conveyance of this inheritance, is, "that they may eat "and drink at his table, in his kingdom," Luke xxii. 30. It is *his* table; and, therefore, the banquet itself will be suited to the state of *such* a king. All the bliss which the hidden manna, Rev. ii. 17.—the tree of life, Rev. ii. 7.—the rivers of pleasures, Psal. xvi. 11.—and the wine of the kingdom,

dom, Matth. xxvi. 29.—can yield, will there be copiously enjoyed.

And, what cannot fail of giving a distinguishing relish to the whole, the ransomed guests will have the presence and hearty welcome of the King of Glory himself, who, as the munificent entertainer, shall occupy a chief room, and cut a most distinguishing figure at his own table above :—for “ the “ Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall “ feed them, and lead them unto living fountains “ of waters,” Rev. vii. 17.

When all these various circumstances are taken into the account, who can say how glorious the rest,—how inconceivable the privilege, and how rich the entertainment will be?—It is represented indeed by material imagery, to suit the weakness of our present capacities ;—but will be found infinitely to out-do all the richness, beauty, and excellence, to which it is compared.

That this gospel-argument “ for endeavouring “ to propagate Christian knowledge,” may be the more conclusive, there is yet another part of the happiness promised to Gentile sinners in our text, which merits particular attention,—namely, their sitting down in the kingdom of heaven, *with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the prophets.*

Man is a social creature, and much of his happiness depends upon the quality of those with whom he is connected : that nothing, therefore, may be wanting to render the heavenly state a *rational*, it is represented as a *social* happiness ; while the whole members of that society are of such a quality, as shall render them blessings unto, and blessed in one another *. For illustrating this part of the argument, it may be observed,

That

* This and the former circumstance in future happiness.

That, though none but the patriarchs and prophets are mentioned, other saints under the Old Testament dispensation are by no means excluded. Than speaking of the whole by a part, there is no figure in speech more familiar to the holy writers. All the saints, therefore, from Abel, who first sat down in the kingdom of God, until the day when our Lord uttered the words of this text, —whether in the antediluvian world,—the patriarchal ages,—or days of the prophets ; —all the Old Testament saints,—whether male or female, more or less remarkable,—recorded, or unnoticed, in scripture history ;—all of them are included in the blessed society with whom ransomed sinners, under the New Testament dispensation, shall spend an eternity in the kingdom of heaven.

Their sitting down with these venerable tribes, seems farther to intimate, that they shall be introduced to their particular acquaintance, though they never saw one another on earth. The sweetness of social life depending so much upon this, it is scarce
to

piness, entered into the theology of the ancient Heathens : “ Neque vero, (aitbat Cicero) eos solum con-
“ venire aucto, quos ipse cognovi ; sed illos etiam de
“ quibus audivi, et legi, et ipse conscripsi.—Nec me
“ vixisse poenitet : quoniam ita vixi, ut non frustra
“ me natum existimem ; et ex hac vita ita discedo, tan-
“ quam ex hospitio, non tanquam ex domo : comme-
“ randi enim natura diversorum nobis, non habitandi,
“ dedit.—O præclarum diem, cum ad illud divinum a-
“ nimorum concilium, coetumque, proficiscar ; cumque
“ ex hac turba et eulluvione discedam !—Proficiscar
“ enim, non ad eos solum viros, de quibus ante dixi,
“ sed etiam ad Catonem meum,—quo, nemo vir me-
“ lior natus est, nemo pietate præstantior,” &c.—
Cic. De senect. cap. 23.

to be imagined, that the redeemed tribes will sit down with those they know nothing of.

The knowledge, indeed, and enjoyment of "the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent," will be a happiness so complete, so glorious, and finished in itself, that nothing will be needed to crown the jubilee, or perfect the salvation: John xvii. 3. But, if our Lord had not considered the society of saints, as, at least, contributing toward the perfection of that bliss, it is not easy to see why he would have made such particular mention of their partners in the glory to be revealed.

Besides, there are different notices in the sacred records, by which this hypothesis will be more directly supported. Hath Jesus Christ, for instance, promised to confess his people, not only before his Father which is in heaven, Matth. x. 32. but before the angels of God, Luke xii. 8. who are not so much as of the same order in the scale of being with themselves? and can it be thought, that he will leave them unacquainted with their dear brethren and fellow-heirs?

Of Peter, James, and John, we are told, that they knew Moses and Elias upon the mount, and distinguished them by their names, though they had never seen these illustrious personages, or either of them, in the flesh, Matth. xvii. 3, 4. But is it to be imagined that, in such passing excursions, glorified saints should be known by men on earth, and yet unknown by the same very persons when they meet with them to part no more, in the heavenly world?

And if in a certain parable, Luke xvi. 23, 24. it is insinuated, that from the farther side of the impassable gulph, the heirs of glory may both be descried and distinguished,—can any thing be more absurd,

absurd, than to hesitate a moment concerning the propriety of this delightful truth ?

Moreover, sitting down with the patriarchs and prophets, is an intimation that Gentile converts shall be raised to a level with the most eminent saints in the Jewish church. They shall be in the same state, of the same family, at the same table,--- and have all their immunities secured by the same divine perfections. Have the patriarchs and prophets the seal of God in their foreheads ? Rev. vii. 3.—they shall have the name of God written upon theirs, Rev. iii. 12. Are *those* arrayed in the uniforms of Emmanuel's land ?—so shall *these*. Do the *former* make essential parts of the heavenly,--- the triumphant commonwealth ? so shall the *latter*.

A difference indeed may take place between the glory of one saint and another, in respect of degrees ; but each of them shall be as glorious as they are capable of,—as glorious as it is possible for them to be. Though, like so many vessels, redeemed souls may be more or less capacious, they shall all be filled to the brim,—consequently, according to their different measures, intirely upon a level *.

We

* We cannot with precision now judge of the rank which different saints may bear in the church of God above,—from the places they occupy in the church of God on earth ;—for it is not only possible, but beyond doubt, that some bearing office in the church, and in that view superior to those whom the exercise of their office respecteth, are not the holiest of the community ; and therefore, in as far as the degrees of future glory may be inferred from the degrees of present *grace*, it must follow, that *those* who are greatest in the church *here*, may be least in the church hereafter ; while *these* who

We shall finish this argument with observing a few things more particularly, concerning the society with whom Gentile converts shall mingle in the better world, which have the most direct tendency to promote the special happiness of each,—the common bliss of all.

As creatures, the patriarchs and prophets are all derived from the same common stock with Gentile converts, who shall likewise sit down in the kingdom of heaven: for, in the language of Paul to the Athenians, "God hath made of one blood" "all the nations of men, to dwell on all the face" "of the earth," Acts xvii. 26.

However these sages of Israel might excel—in knowledge or wisdom, in courage or strength, considered as men;—with whatever honours they might be clothed, and to whatever stations raised above others who shall meet and sit with them in glory;—yet, when they are traced back to their common original, every such distinction evaporates, and all such circumstances totally disappear.

As new creatures, the patriarchs and prophets owe the change—produced, promoted, and perfected in them, to the same cause that other saints owe their conversion and salvation, "the grace," namely, "of our Lord Jesus Christ," 2 Cor. viii. 9. There was no previous excellency, no foreseen beauty in the *former*, more than there is in the *latter*, to recommend them unto God:—the *one* as well as the *other* were laid, and must lie under everlasting obligations to him, for every part of their redemption, whether viewed in a negative or positive light, conferred in time, or enjoyed through eternity.

As

who make the least appearance upon earth, may cut the most shining figure in heaven.

As creatures and new creatures, both the patriarchs and prophets had the same probationary state to go through, the same enemies to encounter, and the same warfare to accomplish, that other saints either had or have. Sin, Satan, and the world, were no less sources of trial and distress to *these*, than they have been, or must be, to *these*. Nay, the circumstances are so similar, that an inspired writer exhorts after-saints to keep the same tract, in order to reach the same goal: "Be not slothful," (says he) but followers of them, who through "faith and patience inherit the promises," Heb. vi. 12.

The patriarchs and prophets entered into the world of spirits by the very door through which all the after-heirs of glory have passed, do, and will pass to the possession of their kingdom *. The decree against the common head, "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return," had a virtual respect to his whole offspring, as appears from the New Testament interpretations of it. "It is appointed (says the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews) unto men once to die:" Heb ix. 27. - and that we might labour under no uncertainty, with respect to the extent of that appointment, it is declared elsewhere, that, "as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:" Rom. v. 12. All men without distinction or exception,

* "The grave itself and all the doleful scenes of mortality are rendered by far the less formidable, since it is but our dwelling a little while with such sacred dust, in obscurity and silence, to arise together at last in glory, to be for ever with the Lord" —The Rev. Mr. Sam Bury's dedication to the Account of his lady's life.

tion, the ancient patriarchs and celebrated prophets, as well as the most inconsiderable heirs of salvation *.

The uniformity of the whole ransomed family, is the only other circumstance we shall condescend upon, as vastly conducive toward the perfection of future happiness †.

The want of this in the militant church, is one constant spring of trial to the travellers of hope. Unholy persons lurking under a profession of Christianity, or their brethren in Christ themselves influenced by illiberal and devious principles, mar much of the believers joy, and manifestly impede the communion of saints : but, in all that society, there shall not be an unholy person, nor one saint otherwise minded than the rest. Their views, feelings, and whole exercises shall all bend one way, and meet in the same point without variation or intercession for ever. To this happy state of things, the words of the prophet may well be applied, that “Jerusalem shall be holy, and no stranger shall pass through her any more ;” Joel iii. 17. and the still more expressive words of this Apostle can be applied to no other state : “There shall *in no wise* enter into” the city, “any thing that de-

* Enoch, indeed, and Elijah were exceptions from this general rule ; but, when all the friends of Jesus shall meet on the morning of the resurrection, it will appear that the spirit of the law was fulfilled in them, and that their bodies underwent the same change by translation, that the bodies of other saints do by means of their reduction to dust

† Tully’s beautiful aphorism will apply, in its utmost extent, *only* to the heavenly state.---“Sed, omnium societatum, nulla præstantior est, nulla firmitior, quam, cum viri boni. moribus similes, sunt familiaritate conjuncti.”---CICERO. De offic. lib. 1. cap. 17.

“flesh, neither whatsoever worketh abomination,
 “or maketh a lie: but they which are written in
 “the Lamb’s book of life,” Rev. xxi. 27.

I M P R O V E M E N T.

Is it so that God our Saviour hath gracious designs upon the nations? I then see

What praise is due to him upon that account. His love in prompting, his wisdom in devising, his justice in approving, his faithfulness in securing, his power in executing, and his holiness as running through the whole amazing plan of grace, should be noticed, admired, and adored by us; and our gratitude for redemption expressed in all the ways, by all the means of his own appointment. If all his works praise him, should not his saints bless him for this, the chief of his works and ways?

That the conversion of Gentile sinners in general, and of any among ourselves in particular, may be considered as a partial accomplishment of our Lord’s promise in the text, an immediate ground of praise to him for being mindful of his grace and truth, and a foundation of hope, that he will do as he hath said, till the conversion of all the heirs of promise be effected: for he being a rock, his work must be perfect.

That Gentile converts of us should be concerned to pray much for the farther accomplishment of this promise: The great numbers of unconverted persons, evident from abounding infidelity and wickedness; the restraints which seem to lie upon the effusion of converting grace; together with the general indifference about the accomplishment of this promise which prevails, are not the only arguments: Their present
incapacity

incapacity of such a concern, who most need converting grace, and the infallibility of our Lord's promise, that even such persons shall be saved with this holy calling, are considerations of weight, and should have influence on your importunity in prayer. It is particularly worthy of notice, that the most remarkable seasons of conversion, where-with the churches of the New Testament have been blessed, were generally preceded by an unusual diligence and fervour in prayer. Should your concern be attended with success,—the conversion of others would be as life from the dead ;—it would be as a new conversion to your own souls. And this would more especially hold, in as far as those who are nearest and dearest to you were made partakers, with their fellow-sinners, of converting grace. Pray, therefore, for the effusion of the Holy Spirit upon others, as well as yourselves ;—upon thoughtless sinners, as well as your fellow-saints ;—upon the preachers, as well as hearers of the gospel ;—that “ the parched ground ” may “ become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of “ water.”

The peculiar need that unconverted persons have to rouse, awake, and arise from the dead. While you have access to the gospel, your conversion may take place ; but if you believe not the report, your ruin must be inevitable. Many Gentiles have been apprehended by grace, whose outward advantages were not greater than yours. Since the commencement of the present century, vast numbers, not only in Britain, and the United Provinces,—but America, have been observed to “ fly as the clouds, and as doves to “ their windows.” Old, young, and little children,—rich and poor,—learned and unlearned,—the openly *profane*, and carnally secure,—the Ethiopians

opians themselves not excepted, have been caused to retire underneath the shadow of Christ for salvation. What God hath done for others, he can do for you. Though your provocations have reached unto heaven, his mercy is above the heavens. Though myriads have already come from the east and west, there is room for you, both in the church on earth and in the kingdom of God above. Whatever lengths in rebellion against God ye have gone, and however long continued—there is, at least, a peradventure in your favour, that, after all, God may see your ways, and heal them.

2 Is it so, that many Gentile sinners shall as really come to the kingdom of heaven by believing, as the centurion referred to in our text did? Then, by the circumstance with which his faith was attended, we may try ourselves; and, with some degree of certainty, know if we are on the way to the kingdom or not.

This Roman officer was a praying person;—and one too who rested not in careless and formal performances, but entered very much into the spirit of that duty, as the *coming* and *beseeching*, mentioned in the preceding context, emphatically express, vers. 5. Hypocrites, literally, *say* their prayers;—they think it enough, if they go the round of duties, without having, or so much as desiring to have their hearts engaged in them, *Is.* xxix. 13. But holy persons desire and endeavour to be as serious and hearty, as much concerned and exercised in the discharge of such duties, as they will wish they had been when God calls them to an account.

The centurion acknowledged our Lord Jesus Christ as the proper object of worship. - He came *to him*,—he beseeched him, and called *him Lord*,
vers.

vers. 5, 6. Many professed worshippers, who imagine they are on the way to heaven, discover no regard to our Lord's divinity.---While seemingly devout in worshipping the Father, they are daringly defective in honouring the Son:---But, unless it can be supposed, that men may be devout worshippers of the Father, and deliberate rebels against him at the same time,---such persons prove, to demonstration, that their regards to the Father himself are counterfeit and imaginary; for, in the beautiful language of scripture, "all men should honour the Son *even* as they honour the Father:" and "he that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father," John v. 23. True converts, therefore, consider Jesus Christ not merely as Mediator, through whom their access to God and acceptance with him are obtained, but as no less the object of worship himself than the Father or the Spirit.

The centurion was a generous and benevolent person;---his prayers, and importunity in them, were not confined to his own, but extended to the concerns of others. Accordingly his present business at the throne of grace, was wholly in behalf of a distressed youth under his roof, vers. 6.

Numbers who could not bear to have their Christianity called in question, know nothing of exercising a concern about others; but holy persons wish, and endeavour to be burden-bearers, by carrying the circumstances of children or servants, of parents or masters before God;---and being importunate for their support and relief. While naughty and wicked creatures curse others, sometimes, perhaps, their nearest connections,---the heirs of salvation pray for others, their greatest enemies not excepted.

The centurion not only prayed, but succeeded :
 " I will come (said the Hearer of prayer) and
 " heal thy servant," vers. 7. Many pray with such
 indifference and lukewarmness of spirit, as if they
 cared not whether their prayers were accepted or
 shut out; and, having lodged their frozen peti-
 tions, they mind them no more; they neither re-
 ceive, nor properly expect an answer :—Whereas,
 holy persons desire to look upward, and wait God's
 time of commanding the blessing. They cannot
 bear to be put off; they groan heavily under
 delays, and earnestly watch for the Lord's inter-
 posing in their behalf. Nay, sometimes, by the
 indulgence of their heavenly Father, the travellers
 of hope are no less sensible of the acceptance and
 answer of prayer, than the *brave* Roman was in
 the instance before us.

The centurion was a humble and self-denied
 person :—" Lord, (said he) I am not worthy
 " that thou shouldst come under my roof," vers. 8.
 Hypocrites are puffed up with any little acqui-
 sitions in religion they have made ;...their duties
 and privileges become fuel to their latent pride.---
 They may have more prudence, indeed, than speak
 it out,---while they look upon God as—how dread-
 ful the presumption! under obligations for their
 pitiful services;---and haughtily undervalue others,
 as greatly below them in Christian attainments,
 and far behind them in the road to glory. The
 more that such persons do and acquire, the flame
 of pride becomes more impetuous, and the idol
self the more established on the throne of their
 hearts. " These, who say, Stand by thy self,
 " come not near to me, for I am holier than thou,
 " ---are a smoke in my nose, (saith the Lord)
 " a fire that burneth all the day," Is. lxx. 5. But,
 O, how different is it with holy persons!---The
 nearer

nearer the access they get to God, and the more they enjoy, as men or Christians, they lie so much the lower in the dust of self-denial and condemnation.—Duties humble them, because of the blemishes with which they are attended :—Crosses humble them, because they are all, in their view, infinitely less than their iniquities deserve :—Comforts humble them, because, of the very least mercy, they see themselves to be utterly unworthy :—Views of the divine glory humble them, because they find themselves so unlike God :—Views of their own hearts and ways humble them, because they appear inexpressibly vain and vile :—In one word, the farther insight into the things of God, and conformity to him they acquire,—they are at the greater loss for a place or posture low enough for them to lie down in his sight.

The centurion had honourable thoughts of our Lord's power and authority ;— nay, was persuaded, that slaves were not more obsequious to their owners, nor soldiers to their commanders, than disciples to the bare word of Jesus Christ : “ I say “ to this man, (said the believing officer) Go, and “ he goeth ; and to another, Come, and he cometh ; “ and to my servant, Do this, and he doth it,” vers. 8, 9. When Hypocrites are wholly at ease, and pressed neither with outward fightings nor inward fears, they may talk of their confidence in God, and flatter themselves, that their views of his power and other perfections are both Honourable and liberal ; but they are no sooner brought into straits, and reduced to extremity,—no sooner overtaken by gusts of temptation, and surcharged with the billows of affliction, than hard thoughts of God are entertained,—his truth is suspected,—his power doubted of, and his love shamefully called in question.—Whereas those of the centuri-

on's excellent spirit never have higher thoughts of the divine attributes, than when their circumstances call most for the exertion of them.--- When the view of their own ignorance, weakness, and unworthiness rises, --the view of God's wisdom, power, and sovereignty swells in their eye.---Nay, that the glory of divine power may be the more shining, they sometimes exult in their very weaknesses and imperfections: "Most gladly (said an eminent saint) will I glory in my infirmities, " that the power of Christ may rest upon me," 2 Cor. xii. 9.

3. Is there such a thing as the kingdom of heaven and of God? Is there such a consummate felicity in reserve for the heirs of promise? Then see,

That this present is not the abiding state of saints. Now, they are only minors, in the life of grace, --but hastening toward majority in the life of glory;---at a distance from their Father's house,-- but bound for Emmanuel's land, where their mansions are prepared; --soldiers under the banner of Christ,--but sure of the victory in due time;-- prisoners in houses of clay,--but the day hastens when *these* prison-doors will burst open, and *these* ransomed souls get leave to depart in peace. They are subject at present, to numberless diseases, and nameless disasters; but, by and by, they shall be where the inhabitants do not,--- where they cannot say they are sick. Many of them are now in penurious circumstances as to their bodies, and groaning under manifold wants with regard to their souls; but, ere long, their whole wants shall be supplied, all their treasures filled, and their cup made eternally to run over. They frequently meet with disrespect at present,
and

and contempt from foes,---and sometimes from friends themselves; but when that which is perfect takes place, they shall appear in their true light, as heirs of the heavenly kingdom, and be treated as becomes the children of such a king. In their characters and interests, they may now be oppressed, by the men who are God's hand, without being able to vindicate or extricate themselves; but then, their righteousness shall break forth as the light, and their judgment as the noon day:--- When the morn of glory dawns, these righteous ones shall have dominion over the wicked.

What then, believers, though your present state be extremely mixed, and the different periods of life chequered with trials and temptations, since better things are provided and secured for you?

That in as far as motives arising from interest can weigh, or ambition be roused by all that is great and good, we should be prevailed with to set our affections upon and bend our course toward the heavenly, the better country. Has the Father promised, the Son purchased, and the Holy Ghost by the gospel exhibited the conveyance of this kingdom, is this conveyance exhibited to sinners, sinners of mankind, the chief of them not excepted? Who then would not aspire after a lot and part in this matter? O that every one may now say for himself, Whatever I have formerly been and done, whatever my fellow sinners think of doing, I cannot any longer resist the heavenly call; whether, therefore, the former heirs of the kingdom have gone, I am now (blessed be the God of my salvation) determined to go; their people shall henceforth be my people, and their God, my God.

4. Is it so, that Gentile converts shall sit down
K 5 with

with the patriarchs and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God? Then see

That, as there will be a most intimate communion among glorified saints, the knowledge and experiences of patriarchs and prophets will become yours; while yours shall also become theirs. The history of their warfare and salvation, their trial and triumph; the history of God's dealings with them in their respective conversions, his dealings with them through the life of grace, and through the valley of death; the history of their doings and sufferings in the wilderness, their down-castings and up-liftings; the history, in one word, of their access to the kingdom of God, together with the holy surprise, rapture, and delight, the first view of Emmanuel gave them; the history of these things from their own mouths, as all tending to exalt the riches of sovereign grace, will be vastly entertaining, singularly refreshing to you. Nor will it be less joyous and transporting, to have an opportunity of recounting the labours of your own feet, and telling the patriarchs and prophets, with your whole other ransomed friends, under what obligations to the same grace you yourselves are laid. Are such communications as these delightful to Christians on earth? And shall they not much more be so in heaven! See further

That true Christians part with one another at death to meet again. You have possibly mourned over the loss of Christian friends and acquaintance time after time:—But you need not sorrow as they who have no hope; for there is nothing between them and you, but the vail of clay, which shall no sooner be rent in twain, than your acquaintance and friendship shall be renewed, with improvements which are inconceivable at present,—improvements which are peculiar to that exalted state

state of things. Holy parents, for instance, and children, believing husbands and wives,—masters and servants,—pastors and people, who were heirs of the grace of life, shall meet together in the temple,—at the table above, without the fear or most distant possibility of being separated any more for ever. Should not this hope reconcile us to the loss even of such relatives or companions as were most comforting and useful?—especially since your temporary loss is the dawn of their everlasting gain,—and since of their gain also you shall soon partake. Lift up your heads, therefore, and rejoice, because your redemption will draw near. And see

That you who continue in an unregenerated state, are not so much as in the way to the kingdom of heaven. If you prefer the society of the wicked to that of the godly, and conference upon useless or sinful topics, to that of a serious and spiritual nature;—if the duties of religion wherein holy souls delight, are an intolerable burden to you; if the devotional life is considered as enthusiasm, the strictness of the Christian walk as grimace and hypocrisy; and if you reckon the one and other of these no better than fruits of weakness or wickedness, delusion or design:—if that be the case now, you certainly belong not to the spiritual commonwealth; and should you die in that state of mind, it is impossible to imagine you can have any fellowship with the patriarchs and prophets in Emmanuel's better land.

Consequently, in hoping to get to heaven while you remain in the gall of bitterness, you impose upon, and fatally deceive yourselves. Either heaven must be a different place,—the heirs of it different persons,—and their employments in it of a different quality, from what the holy scriptures

every where represent them to be;—or else, you in your present situation, shall not have access there. It is an irrevocable law of the kingdom, that “without holiness,”—such in kind at least as the patriarchs and prophets have acquired, “no man”—Whatever he be, have, or do in other respects, “shall see the Lord,” Heb. xii. 14. This statute, therefore, though more stable than the laws of the Medes and Persians, must be dispensed with, or you must be made holy, in order to your sitting down with the ransomed tribes above. But, because the former cannot be supposed, the latter must take place, otherwise you must be shut out from the kingdom of God. But,

Though for arguments’s sake, the reversion of that law could be imagined, and your admission to the table above supposed; yet your account would not be found in it,—your happiness could not be promoted by it:—for, if you find it unnatural to think, and disagreeable to talk of divine things upon earth;—what relish can you propose to have in such topics of contemplation and conversation in heaven?—If joining in prayer and praise for a few hours, would be a punishment here*; how could

* A late minister of this church, had a complaint lodged by the greater part of his session, against one particular member, whose conversation was not as it became the gospel;—instead of encouraging a proposal, to have him expelled according to the form of process, that venerable father overruled that from thenceforth the session should agree to spend an hour or two in prayer, at every meeting. If ye do so, said he, the brother who walketh disorderly will soon save you the trouble of deposing him, by a voluntary desertion;—for, added he, “it is possible to pray a graceless man to ‘‘ath.”

could the exercises of divine worship prove a pleasure hereafter?---And if *but one* day in God's house would be a weariness, an inexpressible weariness, at present, what a dismal eternity behoved the ceaseless employments of the upper house to be?

Your present connections with many heirs of the kingdom, will only contribute toward the increase of your misery and anguish, in the world of spirits. How must you wail to behold others in the realms of light, while you are shut up in the blackness of everlasting darkness? How will you gnash your teeth, to see your fathers or mothers, brethren or sisters, sons or daughters, husbands or wives, masters or servants, shining in all the glories of the heavenly state; while you are clothed with shame and sunk in irrecoverable despair? How, O how will you gnaw your tongues with pain, to discover those very persons whom ye despised, whom ye injured, whose holy conversation you abhorred, set among the princes of the kingdom, while you are mingled with devils and reprobate men, in the regions of woe? Be exhorted to pray, that by the grace promised in our text, you may be brought to yourselves and to the Saviour, be thereby capable of fellowship with the church of Christ here, and have an entrance ministered for you into the kingdom of glory hereafter.

Upon the whole, see.

That though the conversion and salvation of Gentile sinners are the matter of this promise, access to the gospel, as God's appointed mean of effecting these ends, must be necessarily understood.

If this is not attended to, the most wretched use may be made of the doctrine before us, as if the promise in our text altogether superseded the necessity of propagating Christian knowledge. But the

the absurdity of such an inference will appear, if it is just considered, that for the same reason the use of food and medicine, as means of preserving life, may be discontinued, because God hath interposed by promise for the preservation of it as long as he sees meet. So that wherever the end is secured, the security of the mean must be implied.

By this observation we would not be understood as presuming to set bounds to divine sovereignty. Where access to gospel-knowledge in the ordinary way cannot possibly be had, it would be rash to affirm that, in no instance, sinners could ever be brought to the kingdom of heaven.

Might it not rather be admitted, that as to particular heirs of promise, God, by immediate supernatural influence, may communicate the saving knowledge of himself; and that the degrees of such gracious influence may supply the want of ordinary means to such souls? Without a concession of this sort, (which is perfectly consistent with the doctrine in general of a connection between the mean and the end), would not the salvation of idiots and infants, even in the Christian world itself, be a hypothesis frequently clogged with insuperable difficulties?

This concession, in its utmost latitude, will no more conclude against the propagation of Christian knowledge, as necessary to salvation in general,—than the preservation of Elijah for forty days without food will justify men, in ordinary cases, to repeat such an experiment, and expect the same issue.

That God's promising to furnish Gentile sinners with the means of salvation, is a most powerful argument for our exerting every possible endeavour

deavour toward the propagation of Christian knowledge among them.

Nothing can direct us with certainty and precision, in the choice and performance of duty, but the will of God,—revealed in scripture, or made known by providence. Where the divine will appears from either of these, our duty may be safely inferred; but where both point out the same thing, the duty arising from such discovery can admit of no dispute.

By the written word it appears, that God willeth to send the gospel among the nations;—and in his adorable providence, opportunities of contributing toward it are intrusted with us:—What then remains, but that we do whatever our hand findeth with all our might?

The constitution, my brethren, and design,—the diligence and success of this honourable and worthy society are so well known, and so frequently told,—that we need only direct you to them, as a proper channel through which the most liberal donations may cheerfully be conveyed.

Though their attention were confined to our own Highlands and islands, all the contributions they have hitherto got the management of, would fall vastly short of furnishing many thousands of our countrymen with the means of salvation. After a series of useful endeavours, for upwards of three-score years together, the proportion of labourers to the harvest continues but small. And though at present 178 teachers are supported, and about 7100 children educated under the eye of our society, the number of precious souls to whom the effects of their beneficence have not reached, is prodigious.

But when their more extensive plan is taken into the account, the propriety of repeated applications to the charitable and humane, must appear in
a strik-

a striking light. The American world, my brethren, and other dreary haunts of Pagan nations, have challenged their attention several years ago; and are now presented as proper objects of yours.

The extent of *these* deserts,—who knows?—The number of *those* inhabitants, who can tell?—In countless shoals, see how the swarthy people traverse their native wilds!—Ignorant of God,—unacquainted with themselves,—their reason, like their fields, quite uncultivated,—they are distinguished from the irrational tribes, amongst whom they roam, by little else than their erect attitude and man like posture.

Among these savage herds, two missionaries have for some considerable time been employed by this society. Nor has the voice of God's servants, crying in the wilderness, been in vain. Their journals testify, that many are gathered from the immense desert to the fellowship of the gospel;—many, who worshipped devils themselves, now justly admitted to the distinguishing privileges of the New Testament church.

With your substance, therefore, as well as prayers, this generous, noble, and God like work should be encouraged and promoted. No species of charity can rise to the elevation of this. Feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, ministering to the sick, and contributing toward the release of captives, are sacrifices of true value in the estimate of heaven; but compared with reasonable and scriptural endeavours toward the propagation of Christian knowledge, whereby starving, perishing souls may be directed to spiritual food, cloathing, medicine, and liberty, —even such labours of love are as the chaff to the wheat.

Could no price less valuable than the precious blood of Christ procure salvation for guilty men?
and

and can silver or gold be too much, as a mean of transmitting the knowledge of that Saviour to your fellow sinners! Did Jesus, who was rich, become poor, that through his poverty enemies might be made rich!—and can it be thought too much for you, to bestow part of the abundance which God hath given you, that your brethren may partake of durable riches and righteousness!

This argument will be particularly poignant with those who are the subjects of distinguishing grace themselves. When in your blood, did God say unto you, Live?—When you scarce more desired, than deserved it, did he rescue your souls from the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity;—when you were in danger of hell-fire, did God, even your God, pluck you as brands out of the burning?—What communications, then, of your creature-affluence toward furnishing other souls, equally precious, with the means of conversion, can be too liberal, as expressions of gratitude on your part for redeeming love!

But though gratitude for redemption should be a motive you are now unacquainted with the force of—interest might be urged as a most nervous argument. The prayers of such converts, as your charity shall furnish with the means of grace, may draw down manifold blessings, even of a temporal nature, upon you and your seed after you.

Nay, my brethren, according to this reasoning,—while your charity contributes toward the conversion of others, their prayers may contribute toward your own conversion.—Or, who knows but future accounts of God's dealings with such hopeless like creatures, may, in his providence, and by his grace, be a mean of laying you under a
concern

concern about salvation, that shall have the most delightful issue?

Pursue this thought a little farther, and only imagine what a transporting circumstance both in your heaven and theirs, this will prove. *Here's* the dear man, says the converted Pagan, to whose generosity, as a mean, I am indebted for my first acquaintance with the joyful sound.—And *there's* the blessed person, say you, to whose prayers, and the account of whose conversion, my repentance unto life was happily owing. *He* will praise God that ever you was born at all;—*you*, that ever he was born again; and *both* will join in one anthem, for this surprising, this ravishing interview, in the realms of salvation.

Nor is it possible to say how much, in the course of providence, your posterity, in future generations, may be indebted to such contributions as you are now called to. May not some of them, from choice or necessity, sojourn in distant lands? May not their lot be cast in the very places to which our society wish, and, according as you enable them, will endeavour to send the means of conversion? May not God accompany these means with such a blessing, that churches shall be planted where Satan now hath his seat; and churches in whose future increase and glory your offspring may greatly rejoice? For though, in our day, the people we have in view, through ignorance, superstition, and horrid cruelty, are black as the tents of Kedar,—may not the children unborn see their posterity, through gospel light, life, and righteousness, beautiful as the curtains of Solomon?

If, therefore, you love yourselves, or have any bowels toward your children, and childrens children; though love to God and the souls of other men should have no influence, the argument for
your

your suffering this word of exhortation, and complying with it, is quite conclusive.---And see

That God's promising to render the gospel, when published, effectual to the salvation of Gentile sinners, affords the highest encouragement to all who are any how intrusted with that sacred message, to deliver, explain, and warmly recommend it. Though all are not warranted to act in the capacity of public teachers, or, as office-bearers in the church of Christ, called to labour in word and doctrine; all are permitted, yea, commanded, according to the different spheres in which they move, to recommend Jesus Christ to the faith and esteem of others.

Parents, in particular, have great encouragement from this doctrine to instruct their children, and masters their servants: encouragement to aim, not only at informing the judgment, but at reaching and affecting the heart.----Through diligence, in this way, numbers have been brought to the kingdom of heaven,---where children praise God that ever they were blessed with such parents, and servants that they were blessed with such masters on earth.---Though the fruit of your endeavours, who are parents or masters, may not appear to your comfort now, the seed of Godly instruction which you have sown may grow to a beautiful harvest, after you are gathered to your fathers.

If there is no other way in which you can endeavour to bring sinners to the kingdom of God, you may recommend Christ and Christianity to others by the holiness of your conversations. Our Lord considered this as a very proper and probable mean of salvation, when he said to his disciples, " Let your light so shine before men, that they " may see your good works, and glorify your
" Father

“ Father which is in heaven ”—As if he had said
 “ Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you
 “ are called ; because, in as far as your practice
 “ shall give the lie to your profession, you will cast
 “ a stumbling block in the way of sinners, and
 “ marr their accession to the true church, either
 “ on earth, or in heaven.” Nor is it in the least
 improbable, that when the family of redemption
 are fully convened, it may appear how frequently
 the circumspect behaviour of saints was a mean of
 conviction, conversion, and edification to sin-
 ners.

Nothing, we are assured, is more prejudicial to
 the success of the gospel, amongst even the wild
 Americans, than the irregular lives of many who
 bear the Christian name. And the effect, upon
 sinners, of a Christian's not acting in character,
 must be the same in Europe as in any other division
 of the globe. It wounds Christianity under the
 fifth rib ;—strengthens the hands of open enemies ;
 and, where others halt between two opinions, it
 seldom fails to cast the balance on the side of in-
 fidelity.

Though, therefore, you should have no zeal
 or ambition to be instrumental in the conversion
 of sinners ; yet if you would not wish to have even
 an indirect hand in their final perdition, make
 conscience of ordering your conversation aright.

Ministers of the gospel are more especially en-
 couraged, by the promise in our text, to stir
 up the gift that is in them, with a view to the
 conversion and salvation of Gentile sinners.—
 Though God hath not confined himself to par-
 ticular means,—in infinite wisdom and sovereignty,
 he hath seen meet, more generally, most usually, to
 save men by the foolishness of preaching. Our
 labours, indeed, may not always succeed to our
 wish ;

with ; but they must not, on that account, be laid aside ; for no unsuccessfulness can justify the neglect of our sacred trust. The harvest is our Master's, and he may reap when, where, and by whom he pleaseth. Men's getting good by the gospel, and our having access to know it, are very different things ; the former, we trust, hath often place without the latter ; and if the great end be reached, what though our Lord reserve the satisfaction to us of seeing it until our arrival at his Father's house ? And yet times of refreshing, even upon earth, may be awaiting us, wherein God shall make us glad, according to the days in which we have seen evil and had grief Or,

Though, for argument's sake, it were admitted, that some of us laboured altogether in vain, and spent our strength wholly for nought :—if we are faithful in the discharge of our pastoral duty, and continue so unto death, we shall not lose our reward. But how ravishing the thought of succeeding in the work of the gospel, as well as getting our own souls for a prey !—Would the numerous conversion of sinners under our ministry, be in itself an unspeakable reward of all our toils ?—How inconceivable, then, must the glory be, of shining forth in the kingdom of God, as the sun, and as the stars for ever and ever !

Since the cause is good, and the success sure ; since the work is honourable, and the reward immense ; let us exhibit line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little, and there a little. Do our dear brethren in the American service, with a view to convert the forelorn natives, submit to hardships unknown in our spheres of action ? and shall we grudge to perform a much easier task with a view to convert our own brethren and kin-

men !

men!—Do the very enemies of Christ compass sea and land to ensnare precious, but silly souls? and shall any stone on our part be left unturned, in order to break the snare wherein sinners are caught, and effect their salvation!

S E R.

S E R M O N V.

T H E

SYNOD OF JERUSALEM:

O R,

COURTS of REVIEW in the Christian
Church considered *.

ACTS xv. 31.

—They rejoiced for the consolation.

AS a proper introduction to the business of this Provincial Synod, my reverend and dear hearers will, at once, see the propriety of the subject we have pitched upon; to whatever exceptions the prosecution of it should be found liable.

The words transmit a short, but comprehensive, account of the dutiful reception with which a judgment of the radical Synod at Jerusalem met, from the Christians in Antioch; “They rejoiced for the “consolation.”

The context will fall under view afterwards, and therefore, without introduction, we shall, through
divine

* This sermon was preached at the opening of the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr, at Irvine, Oct. 13th, 1797.

200 *The Epistle of Jerusalem*

divine assistance, to derive the following observations, obviously contained in the history itself.

I. That is Antioch, from whence this cause came, there was a church.

II. That in the church at Antioch, there arose a question, about which the prophets and teachers were not agreed.

III. That the office bearers at Antioch, as distinguished from the brethren, in that church, had a right to have given judgment in the important cause.

IV. That though these Presbyters were a court of Christ, properly constituted, they considered their decisions as subject to a court of review; and, for that reason, unanimously agreed to refer the whole cause, as it stood, to the venerable Synod of Judea.

V. That after the commissioners from Antioch had reached the metropolis of Judea,—produced their credentials, and opened up their cause,—the Synod of Jerusalem—*first* reasoned upon it; and, *then*, came to an unanimous sentence.

VI. That two of the commissioners from Antioch joined by two from Judea, were immediately dispatched with letters to the Gentile converts, containing an account of the Synodical judgment. And,

VII. That, upon receiving and reading the epistle, the Gentile converts, as in our text, “rejoiced for the consolation.”

In the illustration of these particulars, we shall endeavour, as a humble apology for the Presbyterian form of church government, to exhibit

“The New Testament original, after which every court of review, in the Christian church, on the one hand;—and every private church, on the other, should imitatively copy.”

OBSER-

OBSERVATION I.

That at Antioch, from whence this cause came, there was a church; for when Paul and Barnabas came thither,—they “gathered the church together,” Acts xiv. 27.

In the New-Testament, indeed, there are very different acceptations of *that term*.

Sometimes, it signifies no more than a concourse of people, assembled in a lawless, and employed in a sinful manner. Such was the mob raised by Demetrius the silver-smith, against Paul;—whereof it is said, that “the assembly,” or, as it is in the first language, “the church was confused,” Acts xix. 32.

Sometimes, it signifies a meeting for the discussion of civil affairs, according to the particular usages of different countries. Such a meeting the town-clerk at Ephesus had in view, when, to the mob now mentioned, he said, “It shall be determined in a lawful assembly,” or “church,” Acts xix. 39.

There is one instance, where it points at church-officers alone, Matth. xxviii. 17. in their ruling capacity;—and of the church, in that view, it is said, “Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven,” Matth xxviii. 18.

Now, it signifies a company of persons professing the faith, and walking together in love of the gospel. Such were certain societies in Lystra, Derbe, Iconium, and other places;—for referring to them the historian tells us, that Paul and Barnabas “ordained elders in every church,” Acts xiv. 23.

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And

And, *then*, it signifies such a company of believers, with proper officers set over them in the Lord, for all the purposes of Doctrine and Worship, Discipline and Government, appointed by Jesus Christ. — Thus the historian understood *this term*, saying, “There was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem,” Acts viii. 1.

It is in the last, doubtless, of these views we are to understand it, as applied to the Christians at Antioch ; — for, as we are assured, that there was a church in that city, made up of disciples *only in their private capacity*, with whom Barnabas and Saul “assembled a whole year ;” Acts xi. 26. so, that those disciples were afterwards favoured with “prophets and teachers” of their own, “to bear office among them,” Acts xiii. 1.

When, we said, *in the last of these views*, we only mean, in as far as it respected the relation which subsisted between the disciples at Antioch and their immediate office-bearers. For, their connection with the church at Jerusalem might be argued, not only from the instruments of their conversion to the Christian faith, — such, namely, as “were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen ;” Acts xi. 19. but, from the oversight which the office-bearers at Jerusalem took of them at that early period. “They sent forth Barnabas that he should go as far as Antioch ; who, when he came and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that, with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord,” vers. 22, 23.

And the subordination both of the disciples and office bearers at Antioch, in their church-capacity, to the collective church at Jerusalem, will appear from the following observations : and therefore our reasoning,

reasoning, upon that head, shall not now be anticipated.

It may be useful here to notice, that we find great changes in the radical church at Jerusalem, as to the number of her members; and may infer, that she behoved, in the same proportion, to undergo changes also, with respect to the number, and particular provinces, of her office-bearers.

That church consisted *once*, only of about a *hundred and twenty*; Acts i. 15.—It *immediately* swelled to about *three thousand one hundred and twenty*; Acts ii. 41. *soon after*, it increased to about *five thousand*; Acts iv. 4.—*Then* it arose to a *multitude*; Acts iv. 32.—and, as if all had been insufficient to instruct the propriety of this observation, we are told, that *multitudes* both of men and women, were added to the Lord, Acts v. 14.—Notwithstanding, they were all along but *one* church;—no other churches having been planted, until after Stephen's martyrdom.

The church, therefore, at Jerusalem was as agreeable to the order prescribed in the New Testament, when it consisted of such *growing* multitudes, as when it was confined to *six score*:—it was as properly a gospel church, when necessarily divided into many separate places, for accommodation,—as when they could all be accommodated in one upper-room, Acts i. 13.

Churches, indeed, *so constituted*,—though they should consist only of *one* worshipping assembly, have the full power of discipline within themselves;—but then, unless it can be ascertained by what *precise* number a gospel church must be circumscribed,—the same power must remain in the *whole* body, though it be extended to an *hundred*, or even a *thousand* worshipping assemblies.

The congregations, for example, within the

bounds of a presbytery, are only a greater part of the church, or more numerous congregation:—Those, again, within the bounds of a synod, are only a still greater proportion of the church, subjected to a more extensive presbytery:—and the whole congregations, within whatever bounds, who agree to walk together under the same denomination, are only the subjects of a more extensive synod.

According to this reasoning, where Christians are so agreed, it makes no difference as to the proper criterions of a gospel church,—whether their residence be confined to such an island as *Mileta*, or extended through such an island as Great Britain;—no sort of difference, whether their numbers be circumscribed by hundreds, or swelled to as many thousands.

The idea, we know, of a national church cannot be admitted by many serious persons, because there is no precedent to be found of it in the New-Testament.—And if *that quality* of our church implied an indispensable obligation upon every individual to subscribe one creed, and be of the same communion.—Who amongst us could accede to the propriety of it?

But, in that forbidding sense, the epithet of *national* by no mean belongs to us.—For, though some in all different parts of the kingdom, are—not obliged, only—agreed to walk together in a church capacity;—what vast numbers, in every corner, chuse to be of other communions?

After all of the Episcopal persuasion,—all the Burgher and Anti-burgher Seceders,—all the constituent members of Relief congregations,—all Independents and Anabaptists,—all Methodists and Cameronians,—all Moravians, Quakers, and Roman catholics,—besides the dreadful shoals of in-

fideles

fidels and profane persons, who treat every denomination of Christians with equal contempt ; after all these are deduced, is it not easy to see, in what a different sense *ours* is a *national* church ?

In the same nation, according to the various compartments mentioned, there are actually many churches ; and *severals* of them, in their ecclesiastical capacity, equally complete, as any national church whatever ;—whether they may be *known in law*, or not.

One congregation, for instance, in the remotest corner, with proper officers, agreed to walk together as a church of Christ,—though connected with no other congregation at all ; would be a Gospel church, no less complete, than a greater *whole*, made up of many such *parts*. And, to resume our former conclusion :

Must it not, upon the same principles, be allowed, that if never so many congregations, scattered never so wide, agree to join and walk together, in all the ordinances of Jesus Christ, as *one* church ;—must it not be allowed, that such a church, —call it national, or what you will, is equally complete, and *no more* than complete ?—Can it be proved, that a thousand Christians, with proper office-bearers, are not a church as agreeable to the gospel order, as a very few ?—And if a thousand, why may not ten, or even an hundred thousand, if they chuse, agree as constituent members of one church ?—Or, what in the New Testament forbids them to do so ?

The connection of our church with the State, we take to be rather accidental, than any way necessary to her ecclesiastical constitution ; and tho', in some of its consequences, we will not pretend to argue for that connection, yet, in as far as the sup-

port and maintainance of ministers depend upon it, and are secured by it, much might be said.

For, if church-members are bound, by the laws of Christ, to communicate to their pastors and rulers,—those, who were entrusted with the legislative power, at the dawn of this connection, did no more than agree to fulfil *that* law, when they rendered such communion of their carnal things a *fixed*, instead of a *precarious*, encouragement.

True, indeed, that was a kind of security, which the first Christians never gave; but, it is equally true, that, in their circumstances, they could not give it. Unless, therefore, something, positively contrary, be asserted in the New Testament, we may, without the least absurdity, contend, that, if those in authority, during the ministry of the apostles, had made such provision for their support, without requiring any thing sinful in order to their enjoyment of it,—even the apostles might have thankfully embraced the favour.—For, why should the *woman* have refused to be helped by the *earth*?

OBSERVATION II.

That, in the church at Antioch, so constituted, there arose a question, about which the prophets and teachers could not agree.

Upon one side, there were *certain men* which came down from Judea, Acts xv. 1.

That these men were office-bearers may be inferred from their acting in a public capacity;—“they *taught* the brethren,” Ibid. And, that they were constituent officers in this very church, is more than probable,—both, because “prophets came from Jerusalem unto Antioch,” Acts xi. 27.—and because, upon their having come, “certain
“ prophets

“prophets and teachers” are said to have been “in” *that church*, Acts xiii. 1.—Not only *Agabus*, who is expressly condescended on, Acts xi. 27. but *others* also, who were scattered abroad after the death of Stephen, Acts viii. 1: and might, by this time, have taken part of the ministry there.

Upon the *other* side of the question, *Paul* and *Barnabas* (who were both office-bearers, and called to act in that capacity at Antioch, as will appear) are condescended on. They “had no small dissension and disputation with” the “men which came down from Judea,” Acts xv. 2.

The brethren, or Christians at Antioch were, no doubt, deeply interested in this matter; as the controversy respected a doctrine which they behaved to receive or reject at their highest peril.—“Except ye be circumcised (said *one* party) after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved,” Acts. xv. 1: And, “behold, (said the *other*) if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing,” Gal. v. 2.

Nevertheless, when it came to be publicly canvassed, they presumed not to go from their own sphere, by claiming any *locum standi* with the office-bearers of the church, or right of acting in their exclusive capacity.

Whether they should acquiesce in the deliverance to be given, was an enquiry entirely open to the disciples, and competent for them afterwards; but previous to such decision, prayer for direction was the *chief*, if not the *only*, thing to which they were called.

In opposition to this, I am aware, it may be said, —That, as an evidence of the brethren’s judicative right, Paul’s epistles were directed to them, as well as to their office-bearers.

If this, however, proves any thing to the purpose, it proves, by far, too much. For that a-

postle directed none of his letters to a society where office-bearers are mentioned, except one; and, therefore, if what is inferred from his directing them to the brethren holds, all the churches, to whom he wrote, had a right, the church at Philippi excepted,—not only to exercise discipline, but to exercise it without any officers at all.

In any view, since it appeared before, that a society of professing Christians, without elders, sometimes bears the denomination of a church;—we may as warrantably alledge, that every epistle, where church-officers are not mentioned in the address, was sent to the Christians or brethren *alone*, as others may interline office-bearers, where the sacred text is silent. But, because Paul judged it his duty to correspond with such societies, must it thence follow, that the power of church discipline was vested in them?

To begin, for example's sake, with the first, according to the order of our New Testament,—how does he address his apostolic letter to the Romans?—To the constituted church at Rome, elders as well as brethren?—Then, indeed, we behoved to hold our peace. But, if the apostle may be allowed to speak for himself, and if his words are understood according to the common rules of interpretation, no such thing will ever be inferred. The address is, “To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called saints,” Rom. i. 2. And will these terms, without squeezing, bear any meaning so natural, as an address to Christians in their private capacity?

His first letter to the Corinthians, indeed, is directed to “the church of God,” which was “at Corinth,” 1 Cor. i. 2. But, as if Paul had foreseen what wrong use might be made of such a general address, to prevent men's forcing an interpretation

interpretation of that kind upon it, he explains what he intended by the church at Corinth—But does he explain it in the sense supposed?—Does he tell us that the church, he meant, consisted of *elders, deacons, and brethren*?—No.—“To them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called Saints.”—And, as a farther evidence that he intended the address to saints,—not as a church constituted, but, in their private capacity, does he not add?—“With *all that, in every place*, call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.”

In every place! Then, according to the supposed hypothesis,—saints in a different church,—nay, from all the churches on earth, might have claimed a vote in judging about the affairs peculiar to the Corinthians. Than which, nothing can be more the reverse of *their* general idea of church policy, by *whom* such an hypothesis would be most readily adopted.

His second epistle to that people, is addressed “to the church of God at Corinth,” 2 Cor. i. 1. Having, just in the year immediately preceding, explained that mode of address, the necessity of being more explicit was evidently superceded.—Notwithstanding, the adjected clause, “with *all the Saints* which are in *all Achia*,” plainly argues, that the apostle meant not the church constituted at Corinth,—but the private Christians *there*, with their brethren, through the whole province, whereof that city was the capital.

Paul’s next letter, according to our order, is directed to “the churches of Galatia,” Gal i. 2.—But, is it absolutely necessary, from thence, to infer, that they were *all* constituted churches; or, even that, in the direction, he meant *any* of them as such?—As necessary, dear Sirs, as to infer, that, because, in the 3d and 39th verses of

the 19th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, the same word * is used by the historian,---therefore the same kind of meeting was intended:---whereas, in fact, the *former* was an unconstituted assembly, and the *latter* referred to a formally constituted court.

Now, if the apostle, elsewhere, illustrates the idea he meant to convey, by such an epistolary address, ---whether is it safest to rest in his own definition, or, without any farther data, to fix a different sense, according to our own judgment or inclination?

His apostolic letter to the Philippians, is the only other that hath the least variety in the mode of address. It is directed "to all the saints in Christ Jesus, which are at Philippi, *with the bishops and deacons,*" Philip. i. 1.

If the inference supposed, from Paul's manner of directing his letters, would hold in *any* of them, it behoved to hold in *this*:---but, not to swell our reasoning, it is *most observable*, that, through the whole of his letter to the Philippians, there is *no hint* about church rule or discipline at all; and, therefore, *nothing to support* the hypothesis, under view, more than in his other epistles.

But, there is one general argument, which we apprehend amounts to a demonstration, that Paul's way of directing his epistles can never instruct the right of private Christians to act as judges, in ecclesiastical affairs. When he directs his letters, to the *saints*---the *faithful*---the *church*---and *all who call upon the name of Christ*,---are not *women* as well as *men* comprehended under such general terms? Consequently, the *sisters*, as well as *brethren*, would have a *persona standi* in church courts. Than which, nothing can be imagined more

* Ecclesia.

more contrary to our apostle's idea of church order, 1 Cor. xiv. 34.

It may, we are sensible, farther be said, in support of the brethren's right to act in a judicative capacity, that, from many hints in Paul's writings, it would seem they are authorized, not only to judge in the admission and expulsion of church members, but to admonish, comfort, edify, and warn one another.

In so far as these things are incumbent upon Christians, in their private capacity, the proposition will admit of no dispute: but, in any other view, it is liable to the strongest objections.

If, in a church or public capacity, every member may administer admonitions, consolations, and warnings,---wherein would these offices differ from preaching the gospel, or feeding the flock of Christ, which are provinces, as will appear, in the sequel of this argument, peculiar to pastors or teaching elders?--would not this make them all, at the same time, teachers, and disciples;--Pastors, and yet the flock; --Rulers, and ruled? would it not make them fill different parts in the body ecclesiastic, while they were all one and the same part? --And, if all were admonishers and reprovers,---where were the hearers, or those to be admonished and reproved? --If all were judges and rulers,---where were the subjects of their discipline and government? --Nay, if all were such,--where were the very face of a gospel church?

But, instead of resting this point upon a general argument, it may be more candid to try, if the most probable authorities, to be met with in Paul's writings, for the brethren's teaching and ruling capacities, will be able to support such a doctrine.

With regard to their teaching capacity, it may be said, that "the saints and faithful brethren at

“Colosse,” Col. i. 2. were exhorted to “let the word of Christ dwell in” them “richly, in all wisdom; *teaching and admonishing one another,*” Col. iii. 16.

Without insisting upon the mode of address, which is evidently more applicable to Christians in their *private*, than *church*, capacity; let it only be observed, that, in the context, *wives* are particularly addressed, vers. 18. consequently they, being *saints*, as well as any of the *faithful brethren*, were exhorted to teach and admonish:—which, in the view supposed, would have been manifestly absurd, since it is expressly said by the same apostle, “let your *women keep silence in the churches*; for it is “not permitted unto them to speak,” 1 Cor. xiv.

34.

Besides, from the whole connection, that exhortation appears to have been addressed to them *expressly* in their private capacity:—The new nature is *first* taken notice of, Col. iii. 10. and *then* their teaching and admonishing one another are only numbered with mercifulness, kindness, humility, meekness, long-suffering, forbearance, charity, and other fruits of regeneration, worthy of God’s elect, holy and beloved, Col. iii. 12, 13, 14. which every Christian is called and bound *personally* to bring forth

But, what puts it beyond doubt, that the exhortation before us did not respect public teaching, but was addressed to private Christians, is this; the only minister, who seems to have then resided among them, is not so much as meant by the apostle in the address;—for the church members at Colosse were desired to deliver a message from Paul to him.—“Say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it,” Col. iv. 17.

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The distinction, however, between the private duties of Christians towards each other, and the public duties of pastors and elders towards their flocks, is still more explicitly stated by Paul in his first letter to the Thessalonians.—The *former* are expressed by “edifying one another, warning them “that are unruly, comforting the feeble minded, “supporting the weak, and being patient toward “all men,” 1 Thess. v. 11, 14. and the *latter* are expressed, in an exhortation to the brethren, concerning their office-bearers, not to their office-bearers themselves; “we beseech you (said Paul “and Silvanus, and Timotheus) to know them “which labour among you, and are over you in the “Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them “very highly in love for their work’s sake,” 1 Thess v. 12, 13.

With respect, again, to the brethren’s ruling capacity, it may be urged, that to the saints at Corinth, Paul said, concerning an incestuous person, “In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye “are gathered together, and my spirit, with the “power of our Lord Jesus Christ, deliver such an “one unto Satan, for the destruction of the flesh, “that his spirit may be saved in the day of the “Lord Jesus,” 1 Cor. v. 4, 5.

We will not again avail ourselves of the probability, that Paul addressed this epistle to private Christians; and, therefore, that any deed or duty, which he exhorted them to, behoved to be of a *private*, not of a *ministerial* nature. And though his sending no fewer than four ministers to them from Philippi, 1 Cor xvi. 10, 17. amounts to something more than a mere peradventure, that they were, at that time. as a flock without a shepherd, we shall not rest the argument upon it.

Let the passage, alledged in favour of the brethren’s

thren's right of discipline, with it's whole context, be fairly and coolly examined; and then the strength or weakness of their claim will appear in it's true light.

The apostle, first of all condemned the believing Corinthians for priding themselves in holding Christian communion with one who had given the lie to his profession, by an incestuous practice. "Ye are puffed up, (said he) and have not rather mourned," 1 Cor. v. 2.

But, is it not observable, that he did not condemn them for not excommunicating him themselves, in a ministerial way? only—what argues very strongly against their having had any such power—condemned them for *their not mourning*;—"That," as a redress of the grievance, "he that did such a deed, might have been *taken away* from them," 1 Cor. v. 2. Not that he might have been *put away* or *cast out*, by a decree of their own; but, *taken from them*, by a proper authority, which was vested in others.

The apostle, sensible that they had no power, considered as church members, to pass any judgment, or issue out a decree, against the incestuous person, sustained himself, in their *then* circumstances, and by virtue of his apostolic powers, as a competent judge of what deliverance should be given, saying, "I verily, as absent in body but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath done this deed," vers. 3.

The next two verses, vers. 4, 5 which may most probably be adduced to prove the brethren's judicative capacity, are, in fact, an expression only, of what the apostle himself proposed should be done, as soon as Timotheus and his fellow-elders, who carried this epistle, 1 Cor. xvi. 10, 17. should have

an opportunity of judging, as presbyters, in the cause.

"I verily (said he) have judged already."—What was his judgment?—"To deliver such an one unto Satan."—By what authority was this sentence to be pronounced?—"In the name of our Lord Jesus."—When was it actually to pass?—"When ye (says he) are gathered together," before Timotheus, Stephanus, Fortunatus, and Achaius, 1 Cor. xvi. 10, 17. your immediate superiors in the Lord, to accuse and ask judgment against your back-slidden brother. The apostle adding, "and my spirit," must be understood, as he expressed before, of his being *present* with them in *spirit*. Intimating, that his prayers should attend them, wherever and whenever, the Presbytery of Corinth should convene them, for the purposes mentioned.

Besides, by a careful attention to the 2d and 6th verses, it will appear to be highly probable, that the whole intermediate passage is a parenthesis, interrupting Paul's reproof to the Corinthians, by telling them what he had judged, and what, according to his judgment, behoved to be done. "Ye are puffed up, and have not mourned;" were the articles of his charge against them, as expressed in the *first*; and "your glorying is not good," was the sentiment he formed of their temper and practice, as expressed in the *last* of these verses.

The duty of the believing Corinthians, in their private capacity, with respect to the unhappy delinquent, was at the same time, pointed out with such precision, as they might easily distinguish it from the part which was incumbent on their office-bearers, and quite peculiar to them.

They were indeed commanded to "put away, "from among" themselves, "that wicked person."

But

But the sense in which they were to do so, as distinguished from the act of excommunication, which their office bearers, alone, could pass, is explained by the apostle. "I wrote unto-you (said he) not to company with fornicators," vers. 9. and "now I have written unto you, not to keep company, if any man, that is called a brother, be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner,---with such an one, no not to eat," vers. 11.

This, as distinguished from the more immediate effects of ministerial excommunication, might have a particular respect to such intercourse as was confined to things of a secular nature:—especially, since it is thus qualified by the apostle,—"Yet not altogether with the fornicators of *this world*," or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters? for then must ye needs go out of the world," vers. 10. Intimating that, though it be lawful for saints to mingle, occasionally, with wicked and profane persons, who pretend not to be Christians; they should by no means take even such notice of any professor of religion, whose practice gives the lie to his profession. They should *note* such a person, "and have no company with him," directly or indirectly, "that he may be ashamed," 2. Thess. iii. 14.

It may farther be pled, for the brethren's right to act as *Judges in matters of discipline*, that, to the churches of Galatia, the apostle said,—"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault,--ye, which are spiritual, *restore* such a one, in the spirit of meekness." Gal. vi. 1.

It is observable, that Paul does not there so much as speak of any one, in these churches, who was, at that time, in such circumstances as needed the interposition exhorted to; nor of any church censure

sure which they were to take off. He only supposed a case that might cast up, and represented their duty in such an event.

The case supposed is, that some man might be overtaken in a fault ;—i. e. without intending it,---without approving of it, or continuing in it. This gloss is not only justified by the word itself * but more than insinuated by the argument used,---“ lest thou also be tempted,” Gal. vi. 1.

But, it seems to be uncertain if the apostle confines his view here to church-members at all. It is rather probable, that he extends it to all,---whether of the church or the world. Accordingly, he does not say, If a *brother*, but, “ if a *man*,” whether a brother or not, “ be overtaken.”

Nay, it is *more than* probable, that the men of the world are pointed out in the case supposed,---because Paul calls the brethren *spiritual*, as a proper contrast to *carneal*, which is the distinguishing characteristic of the world. And if this was the case, no ministerial deed, *restoring* such a one, could have been competent ;---*absolution* being a privilege peculiar to church-members.

The brethren's duty, as recommended in that passage, is very far from being expressive of a ministerial deed. “ Restore such a one,” only says, that wherever such a case occurred, they should, according to their opportunities and abilities, endeavour to apprise *the man* of his fault ;---by telling it to him alone, or if needful, before two of the brethren ;---to put him upon the way of escaping from the snare in which he was taken !---to furnish him with arguments for repelling the temptation afterwards ;---to pray *for* him, at least, if not *with* him, that these endeavours might succeed ;---and to do all so much “ in the spirit of meekness,” as it should have

* *Prolephthe.*

have no irritating tendency ; but keep him from being "swallowed up with over-much sorrow," 2 Cor. ii. 7.

This paraphrase will be fully justified from the way in which the verb is applied in other passages. Particularly, by Matthew, when he tells us, that, "Jesus saw two brethren *mending* their nets *," Matth. iv. 21. intimating, that Christians, by advice, reproof, warning, encouragement, example, and prayer, should endeavour to *mend* whatever they see amiss in *any* man.

OBSERVATION III.

That the office-bearers at Antioch, as distinguished from the brethren, in that church, had a right to have given judgement in the important cause ; as appears from a celebrated precedent of the same court, which our historian hath happily preserved.

While they, says he, "ministred to the Lord" and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me "Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them ;—and, when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away," Acts xiii. 2, 3.

Where, it is observable, that the order was not given to the *church* or *disciples*, but to the *office-bearers*, at Antioch. And that we might labour under no uncertainty, as to the proper constituent members of that presbytery, the federunt is marked, and their names are recorded.—"Barnabas," namely, "Simeon, Lucius, Manaen, and Saul," Acts xiii. 1.

Nor is it less worthy of notice, that these presbyters, *Simcon*, viz. *Lucius*, and *Manaen*, without the assistance of one private *church-member*, carried that

* *Catartizontas.*

that order into execution:—*they* prayed over *Barnabas* and *Saul*, laid *their* hands on them, and by a decree of court, *they*, at once, loosed their present connection with that particular church, and sent them away to move for a season, in a more public,—a more extensive, and more useful sphere.

If Barnabas and Saul had not been subject to their brethren, it is natural to think, that God would have moved them, by immediate inspiration, to decamp, without the interposition of their co-presbyters at all; but, as he “is not the author of confusion, but of peace, in all the churches of the saints,” 1-Cor. xiv. 33. he influenced the proper officers to carry that part of his will into execution.

According, therefore, to this precedent, it is evident, that these presbyters at Antioch might *ex officio*, have proceeded to a sentence, in the cause now before them; in as far, at least, as it respected their own flocks, without the interposition of any superior authority whatever.

This prerogative of church-officers, as distinguished from the brethren’s, may be illustrated by a variety of observations, evidently founded in the New Testament.

Though it appears, that, when our Lord ascended; the number of the disciples was about *an hundred and twenty*, Acts. i. 15. the commission to “go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature,” Mark. xvi. 15. was given to none but the *eleven* surviving apostles or office-bearers, vers. 14.

Accordingly, church-officers are directly enjoined, in the discharge of their pastoral trust, to use the means of building up saints, in faith, holiness and comfort; and impowered, as overseers of their respective flocks, to exhibit such warnings, admoni-
tions.

tions, and reproofs, as particular circumstances may render needful. "Take heed (said *one* apostle) to yourselves, and to all the flock over which the holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood," Acts xx. 28. "And feed the flock of God, which is among you, (said *another* apostle) taking the oversight thereof; not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock," 1 Pet. v. 2,—5.

Both these exhortations are addressed *expressly* to elders. And, to show how much the address is made to them *exclusively*, the brethren are all along denominated the *church* and *flock* of God.

Church-officers, again, have a right to receive, hear, and judge in, every accusation, preferred against a brother or an elder, whether by a private person, or a society of Christians; for, to Timothy and other office-bearers, the apostle said, "Against an elder *receive* not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses," 1 Tim. v. 19. Plainly intimating, that such accusation could only be tabled before them, and cognosed by them.

Having received the accusation, church-officers are likewise authorized to inflict such censures as may be most for edification, according to the prescriptions of Jesus Christ; they being answerable to him. "Them (says the apostle) that sin, *rebuke* before all; that others also may fear," ver. 20. And again. "a man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition, *reject*," Tit. iii. 10.

In both these passages, the power of discipline is committed to the elders; and the degrees of censure condescended on. As there is no room left for the brethren to claim any share in the power of discipline;

discipline ; so, there is no room for ministers or elders *arbitrarily* to chuse such kinds or degrees of censure as cannot be supported by the word of truth.

Moreover, church-officers are warranted to ordain and set apart proper persons to the work of the ministry. "Lay hands suddenly on no man," 1 Tim. v. 22. was Paul's caution to Timothy. And "*ordain* elders in every city," Tit. i. 5. was his appointment to Titus. Than all which hints taken together, I can scarce think, that words are capable of expressing more fully, the power,—the exclusive power, of church-officers in these matters.

OBSERVATION IV.

That though the Presbyters at Antioch were a court of Christ properly constituted, they seem to have considered their decisions, especially if contraverted, as all subject to a court of review ; and, for that reason, unanimously agreed to refer the whole cause, as it stood, to the venerable Synod of Judea.

This judicious and healing measure is narrated, by the historian, in the following terms.

"They," *i. e.* the men which came down from Judea, on the *one* hand, and Paul and Barnabas, with their adherents, on the *other*, "determined "that Paul and Barnabas," to represent one side of the question, "and certain others of them," *i. e.* the presbyters at Antioch, to represent the other, "should go up to Jerusalem," in the quality of delegates or commissioners, "unto the apostles and "elders," as constituting a court to which they stood in subordination, "about this question."

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Acts xv. 2.—*i. e.* To have a judgment concerning it, from whence there might ly no appeal.

In this deliverance, you will readily see, that there was a *reference*,—a reference by an *inferior* to a *superior court of judicature*; and a reference, in order to obtain such decision, as might be *effectually binding on all concerned*.

We say, there was a *reference*. Had the disciples at Antioch appeared, as parties, against any member of that presbytery for his doctrine concerning circumcision, the cause might have been transferred upon the footing of an *appeal*. Or, had the presbyters themselves given a judgment, the *minority* might have carried the cause to Jerusalem, upon the footing of a *complaint*.

But, rightly judging that impressions, hurtful to the interests of true godliness, might remain among the private Christians within their bounds, making one say "I am of Paul and Barnabas," and another, "I am of the men which came down from Judea;" the whole members of that court laid restraints upon their respective zeal, suspended any motion for a sentence, and, with one heart and mind, came to an intire *reference* of the cause.

There was a reference, by an *inferior* to a *superior court of judicature*. It hath already appeared, that the church-officers *referring*, constituted one court of judicature; and we propose to make it now appear, That the *referees* constituted another, to which the presbytery of Antioch was subordinate. To mention nothing else,

The very *reference* itself amounts to a proof that the prophets and teachers, in that church, considered the synod at Jerusalem, as their superiors in the Lord.

Had not this been the case, their resolution, with respect to the present cause, would have been manifestly

manifestly improper and absurd.—*Improper*, as practically bringing themselves under a yoke, to which they were no ways bound by the laws of Christ.—*And absurd*, as the synod of Judea could never have sustained themselves judges in the matter, unless they had been possessed of an authority, for that purpose, from their Lord and master.

Upon these principles, *either* the presbyters at Antioch were intirely ignorant of church affairs; *or else*, they stood in subordination to their brethren at Jerusalem: but the *former* cannot, with the least decency, be suppoled; and, therefore, the *latter* may, without impropriety, be admitted.

It is ob'ervable, as an evidence that none but *office-bearers* were considered as competent judges, that the court, to which this reference was made, consisted *only* of the apostles and elders, Acts xv. 2.

Nor, in this apprehension, were the presbyters at Antioch singular; for, in church affairs elsewhere, the apostles sustained themselves, exclusive of all the brethren or disciples, as judges *only* competent.

One instance, as a specimen, is transmitted by the historian;—and transmitted, as for other reasons, so, particularly for our learning.

When overseers for the poor, at Jerusalem, were needed, the brethren, indeed, or disciples, were warranted to make the choice: but, in any other capacity, they had no allowance to act.

The Apostles *convened* the church; *authorized* that election; and *restricted* the multitude to the choice of men particularly qualified; *reserving* to themselves the power of vesting them, when chosen, with proper authority. They, farther, *gave* the multitude an opportunity of making a report; and then *expressed* their approbation of it, and concurrence

ence with it, by prayer, and the imposition of their *own* hands, as the *alone* method of setting the men apart to the office, proposed, Acts vi. 5, 6.

The *first* kind of officers, to whom the reference was made, were the *literal* apostles, whose office, as immediately derived from Christ in person, was peculiar to themselves. Accordingly, we are assured, that the twelve, whom he chose, from among his disciples, "He named Apostles," Luke. vi. 13.

By the *other* referees, again, two different classes of officers are to be understood ;—*teaching*, namely, and *ruling* elders.

The *former* were set apart to dispense gospel ordinances in general ;—were such as Paul and Barnabas ordained, wherever they found a church ; Acts xiv. 23. and such as Titus was appointed to ordain in every city through Crete, Tit. i. 5. And,

The *latter* were such as assisted, only, in the government of the churches. Accordingly, we read of God's having set in the church, *governments*, as well as apostles, prophets, and teachers, 1 Cor. xii. 28. He that *ruleth* is called to exercise that gift with diligence, as well as other officers their respective gifts, Rom. xii. 8. And church-members are commanded, to *remember*, *obey*, and *submit themselves* to such, in the Lord, Heb. xiii. 7, 17.

Though the *latter* of these classes be thus distinguished from the *former*, it is included in it. Governors and rulers do not always dispense gospel-ordinances in the church ; but those who dispense gospel-ordinances are rulers, also, over their particular flocks.

Thus, we find the coalition of these offices in the *teaching* elder, as well as the distinction between them, expressly taught by the apostle of the Gentiles.—"Let the elders (says he) that *rule well*, be counted

" counted worthy of double honour ; especially, " they *who labour in word and doctrine*," 1 Tim v. 16.—*i. e.* who not only *rule well*, as do *both*; but who *labour* also, as do *only* pastors and teachers.

Nor is the *ruling* more included in the *teaching* elder, than *both* their offices were in the office of the *apostles*.

Accordingly, Peter took *this* designation to himself ;—and took it with such precision as makes it evident, that he meant to have it particularly attended to in the churches. " The elders (said he " to the scattered tribes) which are among you, I " exhort, *who am also an elder*," 1 Pet. v. 1. In two different letters, the *one* to an elect Lady and her children, and the *other* to Gaius, the well beloved, John called himself, "*the elder*," 1 John i. 2, 3.

And, at an earlier period than either of these, we find the same designation given to all the apostles, without exception. When the disciples in Syria had raised a contribution for the poor saints in Judea, " they sent it to the *elders*," *i. e.* the apostles, " by " the hands of Barnabas and Saul," Acts xii. 30.

Moreover, in the deliverance now under view, there was a reference, *in order to obtain such decision as might be effectually binding on all concerned*.

This, we apprehend, is such a natural consequence of the subordination formerly established, that farther reasoning upon it would be superfluous. To suppose, that the presbyters at Antioch referred their cause to the synod at Jerusalem, as their superiors in the Lord,—and yet, that they were not resolved to acquiesce in their judgement ; is to suppose, that they referred the cause, and kept it in their own hand at the same time :—than which nothing could be imagined more ridiculous and inconsistent.

And, therefore, without straining the historian's

words, their sending commissioners to Jerusalem *about this question*, was not only to obtain a judgment of the apostles and elders,—but intended to express their purpose of acquiescence, into whatever scale the synodical decree should cast the balance.

This doctrine does not, in the least, inroach upon the full right of discipline that every gospel-church hath within herself. For, when a reference, complaint, appeal, or whatever men please to call it, comes to a presbytery it comes only to a larger session;—when it goes to a synod, it goes only to a larger presbytery;—and, if it is brought to a General Assembly, it is brought only to a larger synod,—or an assemblage of all the sessions, representing their respective congregations;—which is neither more nor less than the *whole church* judging in an affair relating more immediately, to *some member or part* of it.

If references, complaints, or appeals, were to be brought, from a decision of the church of *Scotland*, to the church of *England*, or any *other different* church in *Europe*;—then, indeed, it would argue, that the church from whence they were taken had not, under the immediate headship of Christ, full power of discipline within herself. But, as long as the appeal, reference, or complaint is confined to any judicature within the *same* church, it is equally reasonable, as if the church had consisted of *one* congregation only.

OBSERVATION V.

That after the commissioners, from Antioch, had reached the metropolis of Judea,—produced their credentials,—and opened up their cause:—The Synod

Synod of Jerusalem FIRST reasoned upon it, and THEN came to an unanimous sentence.

But, that we may illustrate this part of the subject with the greater precision, it will be necessary to put my reverend and dear hearers in mind of a few circumstances by which that *famous* *federunt* seems to have been distinguished.

Permit me then to *begin* with observing, that Paul and Barnabas, with their fellow commissioners, seem to have produced their credentials, and opened up the cause in a full meeting,—not of the apostles and elders only, but, of the *private Christians* at Jerusalem, also.—For, “when they were come to Jerusalem, they were *received* of the *church*, and of the apostles and elders;” Acts xv. 4.

Though the reference was not made, by their constituents, to the *church*,—it was not without reason, that the disciples were present, upon that occasion.

The *question*, in debate at Antioch, supposed the conversion of Gentile sinners; nay, in opening up the *one*, the *other* behoved to be told; and, therefore, though the disciples were not to judge in the *question*, they were deeply interested in the blessed *event* which gave rise to it:—Consequently, it was highly proper they should hear the deputies, upon their first compearance at the bar of the synod.

This was so much the case, that, though the delegates, from Antioch, had no instruction to open their commission until they arrived at Jerusalem, they related the *event*, which occasioned the *debate*, wherever they found disciples by the way. —For, passing through Phenice and Samaria, they declared “the conversion of the Gentiles, and *caut-*

"and great joy unto all the brethren," Acts xv. 3.

Accordingly, it appears, that, in *this* promiscuous assembly, *these* commissioners faithfully discharged the trust reposed in them, --by declaring, on the *one* hand, "all things that God had done with them," vers. 4. in converting the Gentiles thro' their ministry :--and, on the *other*, representing how some alledged, "that it was needful to circumcise" the Gentile converts, "and to command them to keep the laws of Moses," vers. 5. The success of the gospel was told for the edification and comfort of *all the church*; and the question, in debate, clearly stated for the information of the *apostles and elders*.

The commissioners from Syria having done their duty, it is *next* worthy of our particular notice, that *these* disciples, and *these* office bearers, immediately acted, according to their respective provinces, in this important affair.

The *church*, we said, or *brethren*, at Jerusalem, had a peculiar interest in the *history* of the gospel, both as to it's spread, and success;--and, therefore, *they* seem to have *confined* their attention to that ground of the Christian joy, *alone*.

If the 4th and 12th verses of the chapter are viewed *together*, this observation, concerning the disciples, will appear in a clear and strong light.

In the *former*, we are told, that the commissioners from Antioch "declared," in a full meeting of the *church*, as well as of the apostles and elders, "all things that God had done with them." And in the *latter*, that all "the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Saul, declaring"—What disputes they had, at Antioch, about circumcision; and the reference that was made of the cause, to the synod of Judea?—By no means.—But declaring, "what miracles and wonders
" God

"God had wrought amongst the Gentiles, by them."

—In *this* historical part, *only*, the church or multitude had immediate concern; and, therefore, to it, *exclusively*, they are said to have list'ned:

As the disciples acted according to their proper province, with respect to the *history*;—the *apostles* and *elders* acted, likewise, according to theirs, with respect to the *reference* from Antioch.

Having heard the question, as represented,—it is not said, that *they* and *the multitude* proceeded to the consideration of it;—but expressly affirmed, That "the *apostles* and *elders* came together for "to consider of this matter," Acts xv. 6.

In that *sederunt*, indeed, as transmitted by the historian, the particular members of court are not condescended on; but then, their distinguishing qualities are expressly mentioned. They were *all* either *apostles* or *elders*: No word of the *church* in general, nor of *disciples* in particular;—the *apostles* and *elders alone* were *referred unto*, and therefore, *they alone*, entered on the consideration of the cause.

The manner, in which these venerable ecclesiastics proceeded in the affair, falls *now* under view.

They did not all at once form their judgments;—did not, upon a bare hear-say, come to a sentence: but, lying open to such light as should be cast upon either side of the question by the views which different members might have of it,—they convened, and convened as a court of Christ properly constituted, to weigh the whole circumstances in the balance of the sanctuary.

The *difference in judgment*, which prevailed at Antioch, was kept in countenance, by the *like variety of sentiments*, which appeared, also, amongst the apostles and elders at Jerusalem. For, though the historian hath neither transmitted an account of

the reasonings, nor so much as a list of the speakers; he hath assured us, that, amongst the members of court, there was "*much disputing*," ver. 7.

Happy, however, for the churches of Christ, an abstract of what *Peter* and *James* delivered, as their sentiments, is preserved in the sacred record.

Peter's judgment, in the cause, appears to have been chiefly influenced by what he understood to be the will of God, from the dispensations of his providence.

In providence, the gospel was sent to the Gentiles,—the Holy Ghost was poured out upon them,—and their hearts were purified by faith, Acts xv. 7, 8, 9.—From these phenomena, he reasoned to this purpose :

If God, in sovereign wisdom and love, hath freed them from the greatest of all dangers,—the curse of the law ; and delivered them from the worst of all servitudes,—the slavery of sin ; why should his servants, in the gospel of his dear Son seem to counteract such gracious designs, by laying them under embarrassments which make no part of the *Christian*, but were altogether peculiar to the *Old Testament*, dispensation ?—And, more especially, why should we unnecessarily involve them in difficulties, with which, by sad experience, our ancestors *were*, and we ourselves *are*, so thoroughly acquainted ?—How disrespectful to our master,—how cruel to his members, would such procedure be !

Accordingly, after relating what God had done for the Gentiles, he said, " Now, *therefore*, why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear ?" Acts xv. 10.

Gratitude, for their own redemption, was *another*
argument

argument whereby Peter's judgment was influenced.

If the favours which God heaped, with such a liberal hand, upon the Gentiles had been peculiar to them;—if the apostles and elders at Jerusalem had been excluded from any lot or part in that matter;—then the motive, for easing them of such burthens, would have been greatly weakened: but the apostle saw, salvation flowed in one channel both to Jews and Gentiles:—That both were equally indebted to the righteousness of Christ for salvation;—and that the final and complete redemption of both was equally secured, and would be rendered equally effectual. “We believe (said he) that “through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we “shall be saved, even as they,” ver. 6. 11. And, therefore, as if he had added, it would be inexcusably illiberal in us, to impose arbitrary hardships upon those who are so precious in the eyes of our best Friend; especially, since we know, that whatever is done to *them*, He considers as done to *himself*, chap. ix. 4.

James, again, seems to have been determined in his judgment by motives equally reasonable and scriptural.

In general, he proceeded upon the supposition of God's having actually called the Gentiles by his grace. The prejudice originally imbibed by the Jews against this doctrine, did not hinder him to allow *such* evidence of the fact as now lay before him, all the weight it deserved. However inveterate these prejudices might have been, he renounced all attachment to them, as soon as he understood they were wrong. Nor did he only lay them aside, but cordially acquiesced in the newly disclosed plan of mercy, concerning the nations, saying, “Simeon “hath declared how God at the first did visit the
M 4 “Gentiles,

“ Gentiles, to take out of them a people for *his* name,” Acts xv. 14. And, as if he had said, since we have no reason to doubt the truth of the report, why should we not give them all the indulgence and encouragement that is competent for us, or consistent with the true spirit of Christianity?

But, what more especially influenced this apostle in the sentiments he delivered, was the harmony which (possibly not till then) he discovered between this recent dispensation of providence, and many *antient* predictions and promises. He was, at once, but fully, convinced, that the conversion of the Gentiles was an accomplishment of various words of grace, which God had “spoken in his holiness,” and which *then* occurred to his mind, with such light, such power and evidence as he was not able, nor, indeed, in the least, inclined to resist.

“ To this (said he) agree the words of the prophets, as it is written,” in the book of Amos, Amos ix. 11, 12. After this will I return and build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down : and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up : that the *residue* of men might seek after the Lord, and all the *Gentiles*, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doth all these things,” Acts xv. 15, 16, 17. Upon which seasonable discovery, the apostle’s reasoning was to this purpose,—Since *Peter* has related nothing, *as a historian*, but what *Amos* foretold, *as a prophet*, why should we, by uncommanded severities, discourage the accession of the Gentiles to the church of Christ?

Another motive by which *James* was influenced, in the healing overture he proposed, was, the view of God’s prescience ; which he also learned from the accomplishment of *Old Testament prophecies*, in *New Testament*

Testament events. As if he had said,—though we laid not our account with God's calling the Gentiles, and have, therefore, been surprized with the news of it; there is no reason against our giving them the right hand of fellowship, and pursuing every lawful measure to recommend Christianity to their esteem, since, "*known unto God are all his works* from the "beginning of the world," verſ. 18.

Moreover, as *this* apostle was influenced, by *these* considerations, to free the Gentile-converts from unnecessary burthens; he took notice likewise of an *argument*, by which he was determined, in his own judgment, to lay other observances upon them, which he foreſaw might, in some future periods of the church, be reckoned frivolous and indifferent; *namely*, that "Moses, of old time, hath, in every "city, them that preach him, being read in the "synagogues every Sabbath day," Acts xv. 21.

Men and brethren, would he have said, while we loose the Gentiles from any obligation to *one* positive institution under the law; it is highly necessary to guard them against *other* things; positively forbidden in the Old Testament scriptures;—*which* were familiar to them in their heathen state;—*which* still appear as harmless, as circumcision would have appeared unreasonable;—and the propriety of *which* will be justified, even by the Gentiles themselves, in proportion as they attend to the spirit, and improve in the knowledge of the scriptures.

"Wherefore, my sentence," or overture, to be turned, if you will, into a sentence, "is, that we "trouble not them which, from among the Gentiles, are turned to God, but that we" announce our decision by writing "unto them that they "abstain from pollutions of idols, and from forni-

" cation, and from things strangled, and from blood," vers. 19, 20.

Hitherto, the apostles and elders are represented by the historian, as having deliberated upon the question referred to them, without the least appearance of the brethren's having interfered at all.

Whether they were present, during the debate, or not,—there is no sort of evidence, that they claimed or obtained a *locum standi* as judges. The apostles and elders *alone*, without the intervention of the multitude, brought the cause to this issue.

The accession, indeed, of the synod to James's sentiments is not explicitly mentioned, by the historian;—but their unanimous adoption of them will appear, under the following observation, from their carrying the deliverance, proposed by him, into execution.

Besides, the historian, relating a future excursion of Paul from Antioch, fully supplies what seems here to have been omitted, by telling us, that " he went through the cities, delivering them the decrees, for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders, which were at Jerusalem," Acts xiv. 4.

And, in a conference which Paul held with James himself, at Jerusalem, about seven years after the date of the decree,—when " all the elders were present," Acts xxi. 18. that venerable apostle, referring to it, said, " WE have written and concluded," vers. 25. *i.e.* we the apostles and elders, whereof the former synod *was*, and present meeting *is*, composed.

From this supplement, it is evident, that James's overture was enacted, and, thereby, rendered a decree of court. It was not enacted by him alone, nor converted into a statute by the suffrages of the people;

people ;—but, by the *apostles* and *elders*, as the *only* constituent members of that council.

Nothing now remained, but that the letter, proposed by James, and acceded to by his fellow judges, should be framed, in such a manner as might recommend the decree itself to the approbation and acceptance of all concerned.

OBSERVATION. VI.

That two of the commissioners from Antioch, joined by two from Judea, were immediately dispatched with letters to the Gentile-converts, containing an account of the Synodical judgment, to which the former observation had a respect.

Though the church or brethren had no hand in the sentence pronounced, nor pretended to interpose any authority for enforcing obedience to it; they seem to have joined with the apostles and elders in delegating certain persons, to accompany Paul and Barnabas,—bear their epistles to Syria,—and *viva voce*, to illustrate and confirm the doctrines contained in them.—“ Then (says the “ historian) it pleased the apostles and elders, with “ *the whole church*, to send chosen men, of *their “ own company*, to Antioch, with Paul and Barnabas, namely, Judas, surnamed Barsabas, and “ Silas, chief men among the brethren,” Acts xv. 22.

To establish a consistency, between *this part* of the history and what *hath already* been said,—may not the following *hypothesis* be admitted ?

That the apostles and elders, as upon a former occasion, “ called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, Brethren, look ye out from “ among you *two* men of honest report, full of the

"Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint" to negotiate "this" important "business;" Acts vi. 2, 3.

Upon this *hypothesis* which is neither unnatural, nor in the least improbable,—as Judas and Silas were of *their own company*, and chief men *among them*; they were *first* chosen, by the suffrages of the disciples; and *afterwards* impowered, by the apostles and elders. And,

If we may reason, by analogy, from the precedent taken notice of before, this *hypothesis* will admit of a *most serious* apology.

When, for example, the multitude were called to chuse *seven* men, it was in consequence of the sphere, in which these delegates were to move, having been determined by the apostles, namely, *to serve tables*, *ibid.* That service had an immediate respect to the *Grecians* or *Gentiles*, *ibid.* The whole appointment was occasioned by *murmurings*, which could not otherwise have been quelled, *ibid.* And, then, the *end proposed* by those officers in the church was happily and effectually *reached*, *vers.* 7.

All these circumstances apply so naturally to the case before us, that to suppose an illustration needful, would be a reflection upon the understanding of illiterate hearers,—an inexcusable insult upon your's.

The terms, in which this famous epistle was conceived, fall next under view. Though the Gentile converts did not act as parties in the cause, yet, since they *exclusively* were concerned in its issue, the letters from Judea were addressed—"Unto the brethren, of the Gentiles, in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia," Acts xv. 23 —

With regard to the *superscription*, by the *brethren* at Jerusalem, as well as "the apostles and elders," *ibid.*

ibid. It would seem—*either*, that *two* distinct letters were wrote,—the *one*, by that collective body,—and the *other*, by the apostles and elders alone; or if *one* letter only, that the *former* part of it was from them all,—and the *latter* from none but the apostles and elders.

According to this hypothesis, the apostles, elders, and brethren, may be supposed in *one conjunct body* to say :

“ Forasmuchas, we have all *heard*, by commissioners from Syria, that certain *men*, which went out from us, have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, ye must be circumcised and keep the law, to whom we,” the *brethren* by election; or the *apostles* and *elders*, by ordination, “ gave no such commandment :—It seemed good unto us, being,” *pro re nata*, “ assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you, with” your own pastors, even “ our beloved Barnabas and Paul ;—men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

“ We” the brethren, by *nomination*, and the apostles and elders, by *appointment*,—“ have sent, therefore, Judas and Silas ; who shall also tell you the same things by mouth,” Acts xv. 24, —28.

For illustrating and justifying this interpretation of the passage —let it, only for a moment, be supposed, — that a letter to the Grecians and Hebrews between whom there were disputes about the application of public charity, chap. vi. 1 had been judged necessary ;—and you will find, it behoved to have been conceived in terms precisely similar.

“ The apostles and brethren greeting —To the Grecian and Hebrew widows in the church at Jerusalem.—Forasmuchas, we have heard that the Grecians have murmured against the Hebrews,
“ because

“ because their widows have been neglected in
 “ the daily ministrations, concerning whom we
 “ gave no such commandment;—It seemed good
 “ unto us, being assembled with one accord, to
 “ *chuse* and *ordain* Stephen, Philip, Prochorus,
 “ Nicanor, Timon, Parmonas, and Nicolas, for
 “ managing that business; who shall also tell you
 “ the same things by mouth,” vers. 27.

Such an epistle might have bore the superscription of *apostles* and *brethren*;—though, from the passage itself, it is evident, that, in *setting apart* these men, *one* province was peculiar to the *brethren* and *another* to the *apostles*.

But though the *brethren*, as well as the *apostles* and *elders*, superscribed the letter under view;—according to the hypothesis upon which we reason, as well as from the very nature of the thing,—*none but* the apostles and elders *alone*, *exclusive* of the brethren *intirely*, can be considered as saying :

“ For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to
 “ us, to lay upon you no geater burthen than these
 “ necessary things;—That ye abstain from meats
 “ offered to idols, and from blood, and from things
 “ strangled, and from fornication :—from which
 “ if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye
 “ well,” vers 28, 29.

The *laying upon* the Gentile converts the burthen of so many necessary things, supposeth a power, *on the one part*, to enact; and an obligation, *on the other*, to obey. Nay, the words seem to insinuate, that though *more*, than what was *absolutely necessary*, had been enacted, the *former* would not have exceeded their powers, nor the *latter* been excoemed from their obedience. For, “ it seemed good (says “ the epistle before us) to lay upon you *no greater* “ burthen.”

To

To whom did this seem good?—To the *Holy Ghost*, says the historian.

From the terms in which Peter and James delivered their sentiments, we see they had reason to know, that such a judgment would be, every way, agreeable to the will of God. Though they acted habitually under the influence of immediate inspiration;—yet, that their form of proceeding, in this cause, might be a proper original for ordinary office-bearers, in the church, to copy after;—they were influenced by arguments arising from the word and providence of God alone, as the only criterions of his will. And, because it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, it is added:

“And to us”.—To the *brethren*, as well as apostles and elders?—Then, we should have found them marked in the *federunt* of court. But, upon looking back, you will find, that *the apostles and elders* themselves met “to consider of this matter,” *vers. 6.*

If to the *brethren*, then, we should have heard some one or other of them reasoning upon the cause, and giving judgment in it,—especially, as many of them were *also* prophets, *vers. 32.* But, Peter and James are the *only* speakers condescended on:—nor is there the least mention of the *whole church* interfering, until the business was over, and the sentence to be carried into execution.

And, if to the *brethren*, in the quality of judges, —when the historian came to speak of the *sentence itself*, as distinguished from the *letter*, which was only an intimation of it, he would, more than probably, have taken notice of such a material circumstance, and called it, “the decree of the apostles and elders,” *Acts xvi. 5* and *brethren.*

Had there been any foundation for *this*, might he not as naturally have omitted either of the two
former

former classes, as the *latter*!—To mention the apostles and elders, *first*, in the reference: *vers.* 2.—*then*, in the *federunt*; *vers.* 6.—and, *and last of all*, in relating the use which Paul made of the decrees; *Acts* xvi. 4.—to mention *them*, *uniformly*,—in the *same order*,—and upon *very different occasions*; without so much as insinuating, that the *brethren* were referred to,—that *they* had a *locum standi* in the synod, or *any hand* in the decision at all:—and to do so while the *brethren* were, notwithstanding, all along in the historian's eye, is—unlikely? nay, is it not rather inconceivable?

As the sentence, referred to, in this letter, seemed good to the apostles and elders, *only* because it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, (and, indeed, it could have seemed good to them, *upon no other terms*;) so the argument used with the Gentile converts, in the close of the epistle, must appear natural, strong, and conclusive. “From which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well.”

Had the *decree* been *no more* than a *commandment of men*, they might have *done well*, though they had paid no regard to it.—Regard to it!—If it had been no more, they would have *done extremely ill*, in receiving it for a *doctrine*. But, as it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, there was no alternative between *obedience to it*, and *rebellion against God*.

OBSERVATION VII.

That, upon receiving, and reading the epistle, the Gentile converts “rejoiced for the consolation.”

It does not, indeed, appear, that the disciples were so much as consulted in the reference; but, all due respect was paid to them, as parties concerned, in the deliverance.

The

The messengers, from Judea, did not overlook the multitude, as any how below their notice; but, in discharge of the trust reposed in them, convened the brethren, and delivered the epistle.

It is not said, that they convened the *presbyters* at Antioch. *Their* unanimous reference to the synod supposed, according to our former reasoning, a resolution to rest in the decision, in as far as it should respect *their* teaching or ruling capacities;—and, therefore, *unless for information*, the necessity of calling *them* together was quite superseded.

Besides, the messengers had no business, by the synod's authority, to transact with the presbyters at all. Their instructions were restricted to the brethren,—as much exclusive of their office bearers, as the instructions from the presbytery to the synod, were of the multitude.

For the brethren's behoof, the reference was made. Through the synod's whole reasoning, the interest of the brethren was kept in view. In the judgment itself, their edification and comfort were principally consulted. And, to them, precisely in the quality of church members, the synodical letter was addressed. Wherefore, all the respect was put upon them, that, in such peculiar circumstances, they had reason to look for.

The reception with which this announcement of the synod's deliverance met, from the brethren in Syria, falls now to be considered.

They suffered not themselves to conclude what part they should act, until, in one body, they had read the epistle.

However strictly the disciples kept within their own proper spheres, while the cause was in dependence;—it is not to be imagined, that they were strangers to the merits of it. Rather, of necessity,
they

they behoved to be acquainted with both sides of the question; and, consequently, conference upon the subject in debate must have been familiar to them.—Nor could such intelligence and conference fail of influencing their judgments, concerning the litigated doctrine.

According to this supposition, every one who knows human nature, must, at once, perceive, that, before the messengers arrived, the disciples at Antioch might have been byassed, in favour of the “men who came down from Judea,” or of *Bar-nabas* and *Paul*:—and perceive, that, in proportion to the degrees of such prejudice, their wishes respecting the issue of the cause, might proportionally have been engaged, *one way or other*.

Notwithstanding, as the presbtery *referring*, and the synod *determining*, were their lawful superiors in the Lord;—the decision no sooner reached them, than—denied to all pre-conceived opinions, they unanimously considered themselves as present before God, to “hear all things that,” by it, might be “commanded of God,” Acts x. 33. And, therefore, as an appointed mean of discovering the divine will, —with solemn attention, doubtless, and becoming reverence,—*they read the epistle*.

This *leading step*, on the brethren's part, was the more necessary, that, from the litigation which happened among their own presbyters, they had a *recent* proof, how easily the commandments of men might be received, as the will, of God. Circumcision, for instance, under the New Testament dispensation, behoved to be, a *doctrine of God*, or a *commandment of men*:—but, whether of the two, the disciples durst not positively say;—since their immediate superiors, by an unanimous reference of the question, had *practically* acknowledged themselves at a loss in the solution of it.

In reading the letter, they both attended unto it's several contents, and understood them. Without this, it could neither have been productive of rational joy nor sorrow.

What commanded their attention, and became a new object of their understanding, may be inferred from the epistle itself.

They saw, that they were happily delivered from circumcision,—one weighty link in the ceremonial chain :—that the disputable part of negative obedience was reduced to a few heads, and equally levelled to the meanest capacity :—that the whole was agreeable, not only to all the apostles and elders, but, to the mind of the Spirit of God :—that the doctrine contained in this letter was, not only good in itself, but, necessarily good for them,—since it seemed good to unerring Wisdom :—that, as all unnecessary precepts were struck out, their encouragement, in the ways of practical Christianity, had been uniformly studied by their superiors :—that farther evidence, and a more explicit illustration of these things, were, by the coming of Judas and Silas, rendered practicable and easy :—and that tho' the multitude of the disciples, who were their ecclesiastical peers at Jerusalem, had no judicative capacity ;—yet their favourable impressions of the statute itself were abundantly instructed, by their nomination of the messengers who brought it.

These discoveries were considered, by the brethren —as *grounds of consolation*.

If uncertainty, with respect to the nature, degrees, and essential qualities of Christian privileges and duties, is productive of anxiety and pain to believers ;—every one must be sensible, that the pointed knowledge of these will effect and secure quite opposite sensations.

There

There can be no enjoyment in privileges; as long as the *being* of them, and *one's interest* in them, do not appear;—nor can there be any peace in the performance of duties, while the reasonable persuasion of *their being such*, is not exercised.

But clear apprehensions of *both*, (especially, where grace for enabling men to perform the *latter*, and righteousness for securing the acceptance of their persons and performances, belong to the *former*) necessarily beget *that pleasure*, and justify *that peace*, which constitute *true Christian consolation*.

The discoveries, made by the letter from Judea; were considered also in the light of an *exhortation*, as the word * is sometimes rendered in the New Testament, Acts xiii. 15.

The exhortation was, indeed, properly confined to negative duties; but then, it evidently implied an obligation, upon the disciples, to the performance of positive duties also: expressing, under each class the *whole*, by *one* particular branch.

As the exhortation strongly recommended itself, so, from the apostolical epistle, the multitude plainly saw it enforced by weighty motives. The motives were calculated to make impression on their minds,—as men and Christians. *As men*, because it was administered by those who had “like passions” with themselves, Acts xiv. 15. and were naturally interested in their happiness. And, *as Christians*, because it was accompanied with conclusive evidences of divine authority.

The sentiments, which those views of the epistle produced, were, precisely, such as the contents of it were intended to stimulate.

Rejoicing “for the consolation,” is obviously expressive of acceptance, approbation, gratitude, humility,

ility, delight, and resolution, on the part of the disciples.

Of *acceptance*, as faithful and true. — Of *approbation*, as suitable and excellent. — Of *gratitude*, for the preciousness; — *humility*, for the freeness; — *delight*, for the sweetness of the blessing; — and of *resolution*, through grace, to reduce the will of the decree, — instantly — uniformly — and perpetually to practice.

That such deference, is the indispensable duty of church members to their pastors and rulers, will appear farther, from the various lights in which the scriptures represent it.

Christians, for instance, are bound by divine authority, to consider their pastors and rulers as — their peers? — only on a level with themselves? — not at all; — but, as “*over them* in the Lord,” 1 Thess. v. 12. To be *over* them, and yet *but joined with* them, in their judicative capacity, are, in our apprehension, incompatible views.

Besides, the same apostle makes use of that very verb *, in representing the capacity of a man at the head of his own family, 1 Tim. iii. 4. But, would it be proper, would it be scriptural, from thence, to infer, that his *children* and *servants* were so far on a level with him, as to have a vote, in the management of his domestic affairs?

When, therefore, the apostle exhorted the Christians at Thessalonica to consider their office-bearers *as over them*, — would it not be equally absurd to alledge that *those* Christians were, at the same time, to sit and judge alongst with *these* officers, in the management of the church?

Again, Christians are called to “*esteem* them which labour among them, *very highly in love*, for their work’s sake,” 1 Thess. v. 12. 13. i. e.

or

* *Proisemi.*

on account of their *office* itself, as well as of their *labours* in the discharge of it.

But, if the brethren are upon an equal footing with their elders in judging of church-affairs, why should they esteem them so *much more* highly than their fellow church members?—And yet the apostle, ...aware of the great necessity of being explicit, useth a variety of words to express that *most superior* veneration *.

Upon the supposition, therefore, that the brethren are co-rulers with their officers, it is impossible to form a conception of Paul's design, in the peculiar emphasis of that exhortation.

Once more, *submission*, in the Lord, is due by Christians to those who labour among them in the work of the Gospel.—For, concerning Timothy and Apollos, Paul said to the Corinthians, “*submit yourselves* unto such, and to every one that helpeth with us and laboureth,” 1 Cor. xvi. 16.

The word made use of, in that passage, † naturally implieth, an acquiescing in their judgment; as to what decrees, respecting the church, they may make; and a readiness to fall in with the design of them.

This view of the exhortation, however forbidding at first sight, will not appear so unreasonable, if it is observed, ...that Paul used the *same verb* to press the submission of subjects to civil magistrates; Rom. xiii. 1. of wives to their own husbands; Eph. v. 22. of servants to their masters: Tit. ii. 9. and Luke useth it, to express the submission of children to their parents, Luke ii. 51.

To this, it may, reasonably enough, be objected, that, according to such a view, Christians may sometimes

* Not only *perissow*, and *eperissow*; but *upereriperissow*.

† Upotassesthe.

sometimes be called to an act of submission, by their rulers, which would be unlawful for them, in the sight of God.

Doubtless they may. But then, will not the same objection hold in all the other relations mentioned? ---And, therefore, as the orders of magistrates, husbands, masters, and parents may, *in as far as* they are sinful, be disregarded by subjects, wives, servants, and children: *so, in similar circumstances,* the decrees of church officers may be treated, by church-members, with all the contempt which they deserve.

But, because ecclesiastical rulers may sometimes issue out wrong decrees; will it follow from thence that Christians are not bound to submit to them, *in such* deliverances as are supported by scripture?

This reasoning will appear still more conclusive, if it is just added, that the verb, now under consideration, is likewise used, by the Holy Ghost, to express submission in cases where no degree of parity can be supposed. The submission, for instance, of devils to the disciples, in the name of Christ; Luke x. 17. and the submission of all the creatures to the SON himself, 1 Cor. xv. 27. Eph. i. 22. Heb. ii. 8. *The whole of this doctrine may be summed up in the following aphorisms, or propositions.*

“ That office-bearers and private Christians have
 “ distinct provinces in the New Testament church.
 “ While the *former* have a judicative capacity;
 “ the *latter* have a right to weigh their decisions
 “ in the balance of the sanctuary. And though
 “ the power of authorizing be lodged in *those*; ---
 “ the right of election is peculiar to *these*.

“ That church-officers may have different sentiments concerning doctrines and duties both.
 “ What appeareth of weight and importance to
 “ *one*, may be less considerable in the eye of *another*.
 “ ther.

“ *ther.* Nay, the *same* doctrine or duty may be
 “ *urged* and *exploded*, with equal zeal, by differ-
 “ ent persons, of the same order, in the church.

“ That, as courts of review, in the church of
 “ Christ, are justified by apostolic practice, they
 “ ought to be admitted and regarded, as far as the
 “ ends of order, peace, and edification, may ren-
 “ der them necessary.

“ That where inferior judicatories cannot be
 “ unanimous in their deliverance,—REFERENCE
 “ is the most eligible and scriptural way of carrying
 “ such litigated causes to the bar of their supe-
 “ riors.

“ That church-officers *alone*, can *properly* con-
 “ stitute ecclesiastical courts;—and, therefore, to
 “ such, *only*, causes should be brought,—whether
 “ by complaint, reference, or appeal.

“ That all sentences, which must be final, should
 “ be framed, with the utmost possible precision,
 “ according to the mind of the Holy Ghost, reveal-
 “ ed in the sacred volumes; or made known by th.
 “ dispensations of providence.

“ That though decrees, so qualified, are bind-
 “ ing in their own nature;—yet, in announcing
 “ and applying them, they should, as reason and
 “ scriptural prudence may direct, be *cautiously* re-
 “ commended to the approbation and acceptance
 “ of all concerned. And,

“ That, in as far as decisions are conducted by
 “ such rules.—submission and obedience cannot be
 “ withheld, by church members, but at the ex-
 “ pence of rebelling against God.”

We conclude with observing, that in as far as
 the disciples—either claim a right of acting in a ju-
 dicative capacity, -or decline compliance with such
 decrees of their pastors and rulers. as are evidently
 justified by the word of God; —they go from their
 spheres,

Spheres, act out of character, and contribute greatly toward the production or promotion of schism in the church of Christ.

As you would not chuse that church officers make encroachments upon your privileges,—be exhorted to guard against usurping to yourselves any part of that province, which Jesus Christ hath rendered peculiar to them.

The beautiful order of each member, in the natural body, is not more necessary for the various purposes of life; than your keeping by your own spheres, in the body ecclesiastic, is for the purposes of edification.

Though you have no right to teach,—no right to rule in the church; you should not peevishly undervalue the place you fill, as if your spheres of action were chimeras in themselves, and of no importance to the church at all. For, in the language of the apostle, “If the foot shall say, because I am not the hand, I am not of the body;—Is it, therefore, not of the body?—And if the ear shall say, because I am not the eye, I am not of the body;—Is it, therefore, not of the body?” 1 Cor. xii. 15, 16.

If, according to our former reasoning, you were all to act in the teaching and ruling capacities;—then, you could no more be a church constituted according to the doctrine of the New Testament; than a number of hands or feet, ears or eyes, joined together, without other members, could constitute a proper human body. The former would be equally monstrous in the *moral*, as the latter would be in the *natural* world. For, “if the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole body were hearing, where were the smelling?” *vers.* 17.

But if you should imagine, that it is competent for you, as church-members, to bring the decisi-

ons of your superiors under *your own review*, as the *dernier resort* ;--the wildest anarchy, the most absolute confusion behoved to follow ; and you could cut no better figure, in your church capacity, than a human body would cut, with it's various members totally inverted.

But, my dear friends, when the principle, from whence such notions proceed, is traced to it's original ; it will probably appear to be nothing else than a *love of power*,—the *very crime* with which others are sometimes so illiberally charged.

Where, for instance, men,—uncalled, unqualified, and without authority, *take upon them* to teach and govern in the church ; do they not discover an aversion at the thought of being taught and governed ?—where they allow themselves to see nothing but blemishes in the administration of others ; does it not insinuate an apprehension, that they themselves could fill such places of trust with greater honour and advantage ?—And, where their not being acknowledged, in particular decisions, stimulates prejudices against them ; does it not display the haughty idea they entertain of their own wisdom and importance ?

Let none, therefore, deliberately steer upon the *very rocks*, against which, it is alledged, regular office-bearers in the church usually dash. Though they should, in reality, or in your apprehension only, fall into one extreme, by an abuse of power ; see, that you do not slide into another, by thinking that no executive power is lodged in particular officers at all.

Rather, my brethren, be exhorted, to mark the propriety, expediency, and necessity of a scriptural subjection to your lawful superiors in the Lord. And though you should find yourselves obliged to decline the jurisdiction of one church, from an ap-
prehesion

prehesion that Christ's laws are not executed in her; ---rather than presume, at your own hands, to act as executors of them,—be exhorted to join yourselves to such other duly organized church as may be taught and governed more agreeably to your views of scripture authority.

At the same time, may not church officers, notwithstanding of all the trust which is reposed in them, be said to go from their own spheres; act out of character; and contribute likewise toward the production and promotion of schism,—in as far as they discourage the exercise of private judgment, in matters of doctrine and duty;—deprive the disciples of Christian freedom, in the choice of teachers and rulers; or, any how, render the brethren's right of private judgment and free election obsolete and ineffectual?

Where liberty is the distinguishing badge of a people, every encroachment upon it must be deeply affecting.

If the brethren, *as men*, have a natural right to judge, with whom they would entrust the care of their health and estates;—and if they may lawfully ehuse and employ, accordingly, for themselves:---with what propriety can they, *as Christians*, be robbed of the more interesting privilege of judging and ehusing, in concerns of a spiritual nature?

If disgust, dissension, or even rebellion itself, might necessarily flow from men's having their *natural* privileges wrested out of their hands;—Can approbation, unanimity, and obedience be expected, if their *Christian* privileges should be wantonly extorted from them.

Such oppression may, indeed, be sometimes warranted by particular laws; but, if those laws were made *only* to keep oppressors in countenance, (especially if previous and approved statutes are thereby, abrogated,

abrogated, or rendered useless)—so far from preventing, would they not rather stimulate the breach?

Or, for argument's sake, though oppressive measures were supported by ancient, as well as modern, civil as well as ecclesiastic laws; if they were justified by no part of *that pattern* shewn in the scriptures, could remonstrance, and secession, on the part of the disciples, be thought, in the least surprising?

And, to whatever cause prejudice may usually ascribe it, when church decrees have not the same effect upon Christians now, that the decrees of the apostles and elders had upon the multitude at Antioch;—Is it not more than probable,—That *they have not seemed good to the Holy Ghost?*

But, if they should, in fact, be contrary to the “more sure word of prophecy”,—however good they might seem to men of every order, could it be reasonably imagined, that the multitude of believers would have freedom to acquiesce in them?—Upon one supposition only,—“That Christians “might warrantably hearken unto men, rather than to God.”

These being the principles from whence lawful, or even laudible dissensions might be accounted for, the constituent members of this Provincial Synod will bear with me, while *at your own command*, I now “stir up your pure minds, by way of remembrance.”

That, to deprive *all* of every apology for dissension, *You would attend to the expediency, as well as justice, of securing the disciples, under your inspection, in the whole rights transferred to them by Jesus Christ.*

Though church-officers of other communions should hold their people in the most sovereign contempt; (by lording over their consciences,—count-

ing

ing them equally unfit, to judge what doctrines they should receive, as illiterate patients, what medicines they should apply,—and reckoning it no more competent for them, to chuse their own pastors, than it is for children, to pitch upon pedagogues for themselves :) without pretending, at farther length, to determine the boundaries of their privileges,—let our people have unceasing proofs of the most tender concern for their peace and edification.

Though we give them leave to distinguish, according to the scriptures and our own standards, between truth and error; though we permit them to judge what ministerial gifts are most adapted to their capacities; though we hear such remonstrances as are founded upon just claims of right; and though we grant such redress of grievances as is competent for us, and consistent with our character and duty; do we any more, than—"be-
" *come all things to all men?*"

Let the clergy of *other churches* be determined, if they will, in their decisions, by the wisdom of this world, the opinions and commandments of men ; --by attachment to party, *love* of politics, desire of gain, or uniformity of conduct, without regard to divine authority at all ; but, let us, --regardless of every other consideration, of every lower motive, --let us make conscience of squaring all our decisions by " the law and the testimony."

While *their* statutes are founded upon—"Thus saith the wisdom of human legislatures;—Thus saith the councils of the fathers;—Thus saith the Pope, or the People;"—let us glory in founding *ours* upon—"THUS SAITH THE LORD."

Nay, to whatever discoveries *other ecclesiastics*
may pretend,---until *we* see, from our bibles,---that
N 3 disappointing

disappointing, discouraging, and distressing the members of Christ ; that licencing and ordaining men of doubtful or dangerous principles ; that protecting the enemies of the reformed system, weakening the hands of it's best friends, forwardness in censuring disobedience to our own orders, delicacy in finding fault with the breach of God's commands, and fixing pastoral relations without the least prospect of usefulness ; until we see that an imitation of such measures would seem *good to the Holy Ghost*,—I trust it will never—never *seem good to us*.

By keeping, therefore, in our own spheres, and continuing to act in character, the disciples will still have cause to *rejoice* “ for the consolation,”—whenever our decrees are announced ;—dissensions, meriting the smallest notice, will be prevented ;—and the “ unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,” happily preserved.

S E R-

S E R M O N VI.

CHRIST THE BUILDER

A N D

F O U N D A T I O N

O F H I S

C H U R C H *.

M A T T H. xvi. 18.

Upon this rock I will build my church.

AS, in our times, men have different notions of Christianity;—during our Lord's personal ministry, they had various opinions concerning Christ himself. Some said, that he was "Elias;" "and others, Jeremias; or one of the prophets," verf. 14.

His disciples, alone, had just apprehensions of him, and acknowledged him to be "Christ, the Son of the living God;" verf. 16. So believers, only, are indowed with the saving knowlege of Christ and his Father. "For it is given unto" such "to

N 4

" know

* This sermon was preached on the 20th of April, 1769, at the admission of the reverend Mr. Collin Campbell to the parish of Renfrew.

"know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven;
"but to" others "it is not given." Chap. xiii. 11.

Peter and his fellow-apostles were indebted, for this saving knowledge, to Christ's Father and their Father, to his God and their God; "for flesh and blood (said our Lord to Simon) hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven," vers. 17. In like manner, that knowledge must flow--uniformly flow, in the same channel to other sinners. For "no man knoweth the Son but the Father," chap. xi. 27. and "no man can come unto" Christ "except it" be "given unto him" of his "Father," John vi. 65.

In calling and distinguishing Peter, by name, our Lord discovered the holy delight he had, in the firmness of faith, intrepidity of zeal, and success, as an apostle, whereof that name was expressive. "I say unto thee, that thou art Peter," vers. 18. shewing us, that as he knoweth and distinguisheth, so, "he calleth his own sheep by name," John. x. 3. And shewing, that our Lord is wonderfully pleased--highly charmed, with their graces, attainments, and performances,...saying, "Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely," Song ii. 14.

Having taken such notice of Peter's name,—in the words of my text, our Lord directed him and his brethren to a more glorious object, whose "name is as ointment poured forth;" and from whose favour, the persons, the names, the principles and the lives, of men derive all their excellence and value. "Upon this," rock said he, pointing at himself, and not upon Simon Bar-jona, "I will build my church."

What we propose, in a dependance upon grace, is,

I. To

I. To consider what Christ is, according to this passage,—*A rock.*

II. What he, here, promisetb,—*Upon this rock, will build my church.*

III. To improve the subject, in a suitability to the occasion of our present meeting.

I. We are to consider what Christ is, according to this passage—*a rock.*

Here, it may be observed, in general, that strictly speaking, the description of this glorious person, is a task infinitely beyond the capacity of angels themselves; consequently, that a man of like passions with others, is by no means equal unto it. For, “who (says one inspired writer) can declare his generation?” *Is. liii. 8.* And, says another, speaking of the Father, “What is his name, or what is *his Son's* name, if thou canst tell?” *Prov. xxx. 3.*

In the name, however, which our Lord here takes to himself, two things may be observed, in way of illustration.

1. That Canaan, being a rocky mountaneous country, afforded the happiest shelter from sudden irruptions, and unexpected attacks of enemies.

The Old-testament scriptures furnish us with many instances, wherein the Israelites retired to one or another rock, in the land of promise, for safety, when surprized, or reduced to extremity. Accordingly, Balaam, alluding to this very circumstance, took up his parable, and said of the Kenites, “Strong is thy dwelling-place, and thou puttest thy nest in a rock,” *Num. xxiv. 21.*

Agreeable to this metaphor, our Lord's very name, *Jesus—the Saviour*, is expressive of the protection and safety that sinners find, in his righteousness, perfections and providence as Immanuel;

for, in the beautiful language of scripture,—"a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest: as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land," *Is.* xxxii. 2. And again, "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it, and is safe," *Prov.* xviii. 10. —Safe from the penal demands of the law, and the vindictive wrath of the Law giver:—From the paw, also, of the roring devouring lion, and all his emissaries among men. —Observe,

2. That as this rocky country afforded shelter, so it abounded with the richest provision, for its inhabitants; for the mountains were covered with vines and olives, and the holes of the rocks were filled with swarms of bees. Accordingly, we are told, that God made Israel "to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock," *Deut.* xxxii. 13.

Than this account of Palastine, nothing could be more expressive of the liberal provision which is made for the souls of men in Jesus Christ, and pointed out too, by the same metaphor of a rock or mountain. "In this mountain (says the prophet, *Isaiah*) shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things;—a feast of wines on the lees,—of fat things full of marrow,—of wines on the lees well refined," *Is.* xxv. 6. Intimating, that such things are not more adapted and agreeable to the palate, than the words of Christ, the ordinances of the gospel, and the blessings of his purchase are to the soul. Nay, in manifold experience, it hath been found, that the word of God,—revealing Christ, and conveying salvation, is more savoury to the soul than wine and milk, oil and honey, marrow and fatness can be to the palate.—"How sweet" (said David) are thy words unto my taste!—yea, sweeter

"sweeter than honey to my mouth," Psal. cxix.
103.

II. We are to consider what Christ here promiseth;
—*upon this rock I will build my church.*

As an illustration of this part of the subject, it may be useful to notice: 1. What is here meant by the *church*. 2. By Christ's interest in her, *my church*. 3. By his promise concerning her,—*I will build my church*. And 4. To notice some things concerning Christ, as the foundation of the whole fabric: *upon this rock*.

I. We are to notice what is here meant by *the church*.

Without entering upon the definition of a church, according to the usual acceptation of that term,—or considering the peculiarities by which churches on earth are distinguished from one another;—it need only be observed, that our Lord, in this passage, directs our view to the collective, universal, perfect church,—to be gathered out of all the communities which bear that name among men:—the church wherein all the ransomed world shall be comprehended,—and from which no ransomed soul shall be excepted.

Though nothing like this will ever be found, except in heaven;—true church members, of every denomination, are viewed, by infinite Wisdom, even at present, as separated from the vessels of wrath with whom, in their church capacity, they are severally mingled,—and, however unknown to themselves, united together in *one church*.

The reasons of different churches on earth, are, chiefly, two;—their being separated, in the providence of God, by distance of language;—or, where not separated by distance or language, the imperfection of their members, in holiness, must be

considered as the source of all divisions, in sentiment or conduct, formed or propagated among them.

But neither of these can stand in the way of God's distinguishing his elect church, wherever her members are scattered, or with whomsoever they are connected; for "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal—The Lord knoweth them that are his," 2 Tim. ii. 19. Accordingly, the church is frequently spoke of as *one*: "I speak, (says Paul to the Ephesians) concerning Christ and *the church*," Eph. v. 32. And an infinitely greater than Paul is represented as saying, "I will declare thy name unto my brethren;—in the midst of *the church* will I sing praise unto thee," Heb. ii. 12.

2. We are to notice what is here meant by Christ's interest in her—*my church*.

This select, distinguished community, belongs to Christ, as Mediator, in different views.

(1.) As all the members of it were made over to him, by his Father's deed of gift: "I have manifested (says he) thy name unto the men whom thou gavest me out of the world;—thine they were, and thou gavest them me." And again, "I pray for them; I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine," John xvii. 6, 9.

(2.) As all the members of it were redeemed, by his obedience unto death, from sin and hell.—They were redeemed from sin,—for "he hath appeared to put away sin, by the sacrifice of himself," Heb. ix. 26.—and from hell, for, in the words of the apostle, saints "wait for the Son of God from heaven, even Jesus which delivered us from the wrath to come," 1 Thess. i. 10.

(3.) As all the members of it have been, now are, or shall hereafter be introduced to the Father's acceptance

acceptance and approbation through him. Accordingly, we are told by one apostle, that, through Christ, both Jews and Gentiles "have an access by" "one Spirit unto the Father," Eph. ii. 18. and by another, that "Christ hath once suffered for" "sins, the just for the unjust that he might bring" "us to God," 1 Pet. iii. 18. And,

(4.) As there is a real, though mystical, union between him, and each of them; such as there is between the tree and its various parts;—"I am" "the vine, (says he to his church)---ye are the" "branches," John xv. 5. And such an union as subsisteth between the head and members, in the natural body; for, speaking of Christ, the apostle says, "He is the head of the body the church," Col. i. 18.

3. We are to notice what may be meant by our Lord's promise concerning his church.--*I will build her.*

For illustrating this part of the subject the following observations may be attended unto:

(1.) That, in allusion to literal buildings, our Lord diggeth every member of his elect church from the quarry of a natural state; and, by conversion, renders them capable of making constituent parts of this spiritual edifice. This change, in their state and temper, he graciously effects by his word and spirit:—which, when effected, is distinguished, in scripture, by terms—the most significant and emphatical:—such as, being begotten "by the" "word of truth," James i. 18. "born of the" "water and the spirit," John iii 5.—saved "by" "the washing of regeneration and the renewing of" "the holy Ghost," Tit iii. 5.—and being "created in Christ Jesus unto good works," Eph. ii. 10.

(2.) That having prepared them, as fit materials,
he

he joins and unites them together, in one holy body or superstructure. Tho', originally they consist of many different parts,—having prepared each heir of salvation for the particular place which is assigned him in this building, he makes, of them all, whether Jews or Gentiles, one beautiful whole. In which, when compacted, there shall be nothing defective, nothing superfluous; nothing contrary to the strictest laws of symmetry and proportion: for, "In him all the building fitly framed together, " groweth into an holy temple in the Lord," Eph. ii. 21.

(3.) That, having joined the different parts of this building, by making "them drink into one Spirit," he will continue to improve and imbellish the whole, —until it be crowned with the highest perfection —that the several members, apart,—or all of them, taken together, shall be capable of. Accordingly, we are assured, that "Christ loved the church, and " gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and " cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; " ---that he might present it to himself a glorious " church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such " thing; but that it should be holy and without " blemish," Eph. v. 25, 26, 27.

4. We are to notice some things concerning Christ, as the foundation of the whole fabric:—*upon this rock.*

Besides what was observed, on the first head, concerning the defence and provision which are in Christ for his church, when she is built;—there are different particulars concerning him, as the foundation of the building, which merit all attention.

(1.) It may be observed, that though Christ, in his mediatory capacity, is the builder, according to my text;—as the foundation, upon which the building stands, he was *laid*;—for, "Behold, (says the " Father)

“ Father) I lay in Zion, for a foundation, a stone, a
 “ tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure founda-
 “ tion : he that believeth shall not make haste,”
 If. xxviii. 16.

This evidently points at the Father's choice of him, from everlasting, to the mediatorial office ; which choice is clearly expressed in the language of scripture,—“ I have said, mercy shall be built up
 “ for ever ;—I have made a covenant with my
 “ chosen,—I have laid help upon one that is mighty,—I have exalted one chosen out of the people,—I have found out David my servant,” Psal. lxxxix. 2, 3, 19, 20.

And the Father's *laying* him for a foundation, points at his sending and qualifying him as Mediator. For, “ when the fulness of the time was
 “ come, (says our apostle) God sent forth his Son,
 “ made of a woman, made under the law, to
 “ redeem them that were under the law ; that we
 “ might receive the adoption of sons,” Gal. iv. 4, 5. Again, Christ himself is represented, by the apostle, as saying to his Father, “ A body hast thou
 “ prepared me,” Heb. x. 5. And again, the Father is represented as saying concerning Christ,
 “ with my holy oil have I anointed him,” Psal. lxxxix. 20.

(2.) Observe, that Christ, the foundation of his church, is a *rock*, to point out what a strong and durable object of trust he is, in his divine nature. “ For,” according to Isaiah, “ in this Lord Jehovah
 “ there is everlasting strength,” Is. xxvi. 4. And, according to the apostle, “ Jesus Christ is the same
 “ yesterday, to-day, and for ever,” Heb. xii. 8.

Nay, in his very human nature, our Lord may be called a *stone* or *rock*, with manifest propriety ;—because, as stones are raised out of a bed or quarry, replete with that mineral, the man Christ Jesus,
 that

that he might be a proper foundation, was taken from among men. Accordingly, in the language of the apostle, quoting from the Old-testament scriptures, "Moses truly said unto the fathers, a prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, of your brethren, like unto me," Acts iii. 22.

(3.) Observe, that, as the foundations of public buildings, by certain engravings, transmit the name—the author—the date—and other remarkable circumstances, to posterity ;—so, of our Lord, as the foundation of his church, the Father is represented as saying, "Behold the stone that I have laid ; upon one stone shall be seven eyes :—Behold I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the Lord of hosts," Zech. iii. 9.

Of these engravings, several particulars are condescended upon :—such as Immanuel's own name, For, "on his thigh, a name is written, KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS," Rev. xix. 16. His peoples names are likewise engraved on this foundation, according to his own words, "Behold I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands," Is. xlix. 16. And, as, in the foundation of ancient buildings, certain characters may be found which after ages cannot decipher,—so our Lord is represented as having "a name written that no man knew but he himself," Rev. xix. 12.

(4.) Observe, that the foundations, especially, of public buildings are laid with some kind of solemnity, and accompanied with particular expressions of joy :—so, from eternity, God the Father and God the Son, are represented as delighting in the foundation of the church ;—"Then (says Immanuel, referring to the morning of eternity) I was by" the Father, "as one brought up with him ; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always

“ ways before him :—rejoicing in the habitable
“ part of the earth, and my delights were with the
“ sons of men,” Prov. viii. 30, 31.

As soon as angels knew of the ancient decree, by God’s beginning to erect the stage on which the wonders of redemption, in the building of mercy, were to be displayed, they celebrated the solemnity, under view, with peculiar demonstrations of gladness. “ Where wast thou (said the Lord to “ Job) when the morning stars sang together, and “ all the sons of God shouted for joy ?” Job xxxviii. 7.

When the laying of this foundation was brought to maturer light, by the incarnation of the Son of God, these angelic songsters repeated their celebration of this solemnity with new anthems of praise. —“ And suddenly (says the evangelist) there was “ with the angel,” who announced the birth of Christ to the shepherds at Bethlehem, “ a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and “ saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth “ peace, good-will towards men,” Luke ii. 13, 14.

Nay, so much is the foundation of the church of God an occasion of joy, that the accession of every sinner to it, at conversion, is celebrated with new and seraphic songs of triumph.—“ Joy (says our “ Lord himself) shall be in heaven over one sinner “ that repenteth :”—and again, “ there is joy, in “ the presence of the angels of God, over” every such believing penitent, Luke xv. 7, 10.

(5.) Observe, that there are certain things wherein the foundation of the ransomed church excels all the material imagery by which it is pointed out.

In the same bed from whence foundation stones are dug, others, of equal size, suitableness and value, might be raised ; but Jesus Christ was the only person in heaven or on earth, who could bear the

the weight of this sacred superstructure. Before he appeared, none could be found who was equal to the mighty undertaking; and after he appeared; none could ever pretend to rival it with him. Accordingly, the apostle assures us, that "other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ," 1 Cor. iii. 11.

Again, while literal foundation stones are brought out, and wrought up by the hand of the artist, without whose interposition they behoved to have lain in the bowels of the earth;—the ministry of creatures was not sought or employed in raising up Jesus Christ, the mystical foundation; for, this "stone was cut out of the mountain without hands," Dan. ii. 45.

Farther, the stones whereof other foundations consist, are inanimate matter. As they have no life in themselves, they can communicate none to the constituent parts of the buildings which stand upon them. But our Lord, in the quality of a foundation, both hath life in himself, and can communicate life to all the members of his church: "To whom coming (says the apostle, speaking of Christ) as unto a living stone;—ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house," 1 Pet. ii. 4, 5.

Moreover, the same stone, in a literal sense, if it be the foundation, can occupy no other place, at the same time, and in the same building; whereas, the wonderful person we now speak of,—the stone cut out of the mountain without hands, is, at once, the corner, as well as foundation of this spiritual house. Accordingly, he is called "the head stone of the corner," by David, Psal. cxviii. 22.—"a precious corner-stone," by Isaiah, xxviii. 16. and "the chief corner-stone," by the apostle, Eph. ii. 20.

This

This view greatly raises the virtue and value of Jesus Christ, with respect to his church. As the *corner*—the *precious* corner—the *head* of the corner—the *chief* corner stone, he so *binds* the several members of his church together,—that they can no more be disjoined, than the walls, on either side of the angle, in which the corner is laid. “Ho-ly Father, (says he) keep, through thine own name, those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are,” John xvii. 11. And, since the Father heareth him always, this prayer assures us, that the union, amongst the members of Christ, can no more be dissolved,—than the union between the Father and the Son.

Nor does he only bind,—but, as the corner, also *beautifies* the ecclesiastic fabric, in the following and such like views :

(1.) Any outward beauty for which the saved ones are remarkable, ariseth from his most honourable righteousness, imputed to them, and improved by them. “ I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, (says the prophet) my soul shall be joyful in my God, for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments; and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels,” Is. lxi. 10.

(2.) Any inward beauty by which they are distinguished from others, is effected by his holy Spirit given unto them. “ The Spirit of truth, (said our Lord to his disciples) whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; ye know, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you,” John xiv. 17. And,

(3.) Any scriptural conformity, in their lives, to the law of God which hath place, flows from the womb of the promise, which is yea and amen

in him. "I will put my spirit within you, (says the Promiser) and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them," Ezek. xxxvi. 27.

By the *first* of these, God-Redeemer himself accounts them beautiful, saying, "Thou art all fair my love, there is no spot in thee," Song iv.

7. By the *second*, pardoned sinners have a humble consciousness of a gracious difference between what they are, and what they were:—"God, who is rich in mercy, (say they) for his great love where-with he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ," Eph. ii. 4, 5. And by the *third*, the truth of religion in them, appears to the conviction and edification of others:—"Let your light (says our Lord to his followers) so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven," Matth. v. 16.

III. We come now to the improvement of the subject. And,

If the church of Christ be built upon himself, the office and work of gospel ministers will naturally appear.

As to their *office*, according to my text, they are under-builders: They derive their warrant from the Father, who laid the foundation; and from the Son, who builds the temple. Thus, in the discharge of that trust, the Father and the Son are represented as their joint constituents. "We are ambassadors *for Christ*, (says the apostle) as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you *in Christ's stead*, be ye reconciled to God," 2 Cor. v. 20. And faithful ministers are, therefore, represented as "labourers together with God," 1 Cor. iii. 9.

With

With respect to the *work* of gospel-ministers, it is evidently confined to this sacred building; and may be reduced to the following views.

1. It is their business to point out the foundation, as laid,—Jesus Christ, in his *person*, God Man;—in his *doctrines*, which are all wholesome, sound, and according to godliness;—in his *life*, which was holy, harmless, and undefiled;—in his *death*, which was propitiatory, and meritorious;—in his *office*, as Mediator between God and man, the Father's servant, and the sinner's surety;—in his *purchase*, as comprehending all special and saving blessings, and as rendering even the common blessings of life covenant blessings to his people;—in his *intercession*, as securing the dispensation of grace and glory, and every good thing to his church;—in his *law*, as the rule of life;—in his *spirit*, as the efficient cause of holiness and new obedience;—in his *righteousness*, as the sinners only plea, for the acceptance of their persons and services, with God;—and in his *exclusive authority and ability* to save.

2. It is the business of gospel-ministers, to aim at bringing sinners to Christ as the foundation of his church.—To shew them their guilt, misery, and danger, without Christ;—the impossibility of recovering themselves;—the suitableness, freeness, and fulness of the gospel salvation;—the nature, also, and extent of the gospel offer;—together with such motives as may most probably have influence upon them.

3. It is the business of gospel ministers, to aim at the advancement of this building, by using the means of promoting the work of grace in true converts;—to represent the exceeding broadness of the divine law, and their obligations to it;—to shew how far they are from having attained, or being perfect;—to point out the connection between de-
strate

grees of grace here, and glory hereafter ;—to illustrate the promises and words of grace, by which they may perfect holiness in the fear of God ; to direct them in straits ; encourage them under trials ; and, by every mean competent for them, to bring them forward in the way to heaven.

4. It is the business of gospel ministers to superintend the building ; or, in the exercise of church discipline and government, to guard against every thing which may mar it's progress, or sully it's beauty ;—more especially, against every thing which may tend to pull down what is already built, and, thereby, to render the hopes of faithful builders, or true church members abortive.

5. It is the business of gospel ministers, not only to aim at the things which have been mentioned, but, in the exercise of their ministry, to observe the order in which these things should proceed,—lest, by inverting the order, they subvert the great end in view.

If, for example, ministers of the gospel should begin their dealings with unconverted souls, by the exercise of discipline ; or, even by representing the duties of holy obedience, without recommending Christ as the foundation, and directing them to the improvement of him ; they would do no better, than a builder who should raise a superstructure before he laid the foundation.

Whereas, by beginning with endeavours to point out the personal excellence, and mediatorial glory of Christ,—and to bring sinners to believe in him, for pardon and acceptance ;—the ends of heart holiness and external obedience are scripturally—absolutely secured.

All the application I shall make of these hints, to my dear fellow labourers here present, is, in the words of our Lord, “ If ye know these things,
“ happy

“happy are ye, if ye do them,” John xiii. 17.—
and in the words of Paul, “I speak as to wife men;
“judge ye what I say,” 1 Cor. x. 15.

T H E C H A R G E.

Reverend, dear Brother,

With whatever pleasure and advantage I have,
oftner than once, learned at your feet.—it is not
without some degree of concern, that any exhorta-
tion I am capable of, should be immediately ad-
dressed to you.

Obedience, however, to my superiors in the
Lord, and regard to the trust I have received from
our common Master, animate my resolution in the
discharge even of this difficult duty.

Were you, dear sir, in my place, and I in your's,
I can easily imagine, with what warmth of heart
you would descant on the importance of a pastoral
trust,—as committed to me, by the chief Shepherd;
—as connected with the salvation of precious souls:
and a trust, for the discharge whereof, I behoved
to account, at the end of the days.

I can imagine, also, with what propriety you
would illustrate the advantage of a continued and
growing concern about my own soul:—that I
might, thereby, learn how to deal with others:—
and that, after preaching the gospel to my fellow-
sinners, I myself might not be a cast-away.

I can imagine, from your known attachment to
the interests of holiness, with what zeal you would
recommend the tenderness and circumspection of
life upon me, which would be necessary to vouch
the truth of my own character, as a Christian,—to
enforce the doctrines I should teach,—and to en-
gage my hearers in the love and practice of their
duty.

I can,

I can, likewise, imagine, that, in the supposed change of place, you would describe, with that accuracy and precision which are familiar to you, the variety, as to matter and manner both, in the exercise of my ministry,—which the state, the temper, the station, the abilities, the age, and other circumstances, common or peculiar, of my flock, might require.

Would you not, my dear brother, endeavour to inspire me with a superior love of the truth ;—with a concern to understand it,—to distinguish it from error,—to preach it in season and out of season,—to contend earnestly for it,—and to fix my attention, more especially, to such truths as might be overlooked or exploded by others !

Would you not endeavour to rouse up the use of any influence, and employment of any talents I was possessed of, in the exercise of my judicative-capacity, —toward the suppression of vice and heresy, toward the transmission of a sound and faithful ministry ;—and toward the preservation or recovery of all the prerogatives of Zion's King, and all the rights and privileges of Zion's children ?

Yes. —I know that my reverend friend would do so :—and do it, without allowed digression into *their* steps, who bound heavy burdens, and grievous to be born, upon others, while they touched them not with one of their fingers. Luke xi. 46.

And, now, as the conclusion of the whole matter,—know, reverend and dear brother, that, in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath *now* given pastors and teachers, as he *formerly* gave prophets and apostles to his body the church ; and by appointment of the presbytery of Paisley, my immediate constituents, I hereby devolve the
pastoral

pastoral charge of this parish of Renfrew upon you ;
—calling, beseeching and requiring you, in the
spirited language of scripture, “To take heed
“unto yourself; and to all this flock, over which
“the holy Ghost hath made you an overseer, to
“feed the church of God, which he hath purchased
“with his own blood,” Acts xx. 28.—To “take
“the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but
“willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready
“mind; neither as being a lord over God’s heritage,
“but being an ensample to the flock,” 1 Pet. v. 2,
3.—To “take heed to the ministry, which thou
“hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it,”
Col. iv. 7.—To “take heed unto thyself and to
“thy doctrine; and to continue in them,” 1 Tim.
iv. 16.

Finally, “I charge thee,” dear brother, “before
“God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect
“angels, that thou observe these things, without
“preferring one before another, doing nothing by
“partiality,” 1 Tim. v. 21. Again, “I give thee
“charge, in the sight of God, who quickeneth all
“things; and Jesus Christ, who, before Pontius
“Pilate, witnessed a good confession before many
“witnesses, that thou keep this commandment,
“without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing
“of our Lord Jesus Christ.” And again, “O sir,
“keep that which is committed to thy trust. --
“Grace be with thee. Amen,” 1 Tim. vi. 13,
14, 20, 21.

The address I should, last of all, make to the
constituent members of this congregation, shall be
confined likewise to a few scripture exhortations,
that I be not farther tedious to my audience.---
“Receive him, therefore, in the Lord, with all
“gladness; and hold such in reputation,” Phil. ii.

29.—“We beseech you, brethren, to know him
“ which laboureth among you, and is over you in
“ the Lord, and admonisheth you; and to esteem
“ him very highly in love, for his work’s sake,”
1 Thess. v. 12, 13.—“Remember him which hath
“ the rule over you, who speaketh unto you the
“ word of God: whose faith follow, considering
“ the end of his conversation.”—And, in one word,
“ Obey him that hath the rule over you, and submit
“ yourselves; for he watcheth for your souls, as
“ one that must give account: that he may do it
“ with joy, and not with grief,” Heb. xiii. 7, 17.

T H E E N D.





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